HOMI BHABHA

AN INTRODUCTION AND CRITIQUE

VOLUME 2: COLONIALISM AND INBETWEENNESS

Andrew McLaverty-Robinson

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Some of the materials contained in these volumes will be adapted for use in the author's column, https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/category/columns/in-theory/ where related materials on poststructuralism and critical theory can already be found.

About the Author

Andrew McLaverty-Robinson, who has previously published under the name Andrew Robinson or Andy Robinson, is a recovering former academic, freelance scholar and political commentator based in the UK. He has previously co-authored *Power, Conflict and Resistance in the Contemporary World* with Athina Karatzogianni, and co-edited *Riots and Militant Occupations* with Alissa Starodub. He has published over 20 peer-reviewed articles and chapters on a wide range of topics including critical theory, discourse, and radical politics.

Note on Readability

One of the purposes of this book is to provide an accurate, not "dumbed down", but accessible introduction to a theorist whose works are notoriously difficult. The author has run the text through a document readability tool prior to publication. The

book registers at 14.43 on the Gunning Fog Index, 13.47 on the Coleman Liau Index, 12.29 on Flesch Kincaid Grade Level, 11.67 on Automated Readability Index (ARI), 13.69 on SMOG, and 36.32 on Flesch Reading Ease. This indicates that an A-level student in the UK or an American in the top school grade or first year at university will be able to understand the text easily on a first reading. A representative sample from Homi Bhabha's *Location of Culture* scores 21.57 on the Gunning Fog Index and 18.50 on the Grade Level. This should be taken as indicative only, as these tools do not capture qualitative aspects of reading ease or difficulty.

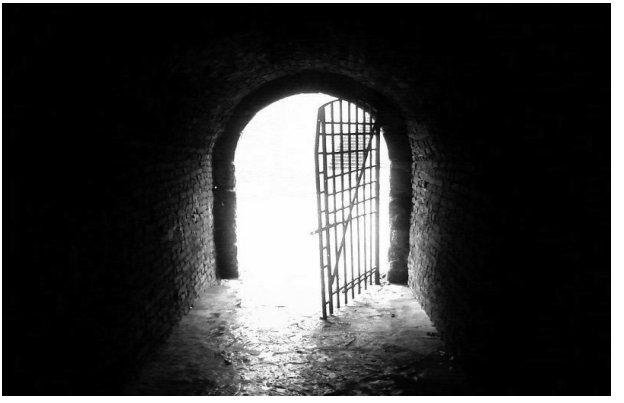
CHAPTER 5

Inbetweenness, Borders and Marginality

Ambiguity and Identity

Ambiguity, border zones, inbetweenness, liminality, ambivalence, hybridity, time-lag... In most of his work, Bhabha is talking about what other theorists have termed border thinking (Mignolo, 1999). He encourages readers to think from the point which is inbetween, or at the border between, any two fixed categories (e.g. empire-colony, white-black, male-female). For Bhabha, this is always the point at which binary oppositions can be subverted. It is also where new possibilities can be created, which are distinct from those created by the dominant system. As we shall see, he defines subjectivity itself – the site of individual or collective action (see above, Chapter 2) – as necessarily an inbetween site. This general theoretical point is repeated *ad nauseam* in slightly different forms, reconfigured for different contexts. Bhabha sometimes writes of borders or inbetweenness. At other times, he uses longer, more difficult words such as liminality or ambivalence or the third space or the hymen or the time-lag or the *Unheimlich*. These are basically alternative ways of saying inbetweenness or the border space. By using different words for the same (or very similar) concepts, Bhabha partially conceals the repetitiveness of his basic arguments. In this book, I've used inbetweenness as a blanket term for all these categories. But there are also subtle differences between them. Bhabha also talks about border zones and inbetweenness in both the singular and the plural. This is because he thinks particular inbetween zones (say, between coloniser and colonised, or a migrant's former and current places of residence) stand for the fundamental inbetween zone from which all meaning stems.

One tactical media collective defines liminality as follows: 'Far from the centre, close to the border. A zone both between and without larger structures... Being *liminal* is to be close to, and yet stand outside the site of the border of any stable system of signs, where meaning is frayed from being nibbled at the edges' (Raqs Media Collective, 2003:361). For Bhabha, the inbetween or 'liminal' zone is the zone in which transformations happen. It is the strategic site for radical politics and culture. This renders borders between groups particularly dangerous for fixed identities. And it renders them particularly useful for resistance. When discussing inter-group relations, Bhabha focuses on the fault-lines between groups, not the groups themselves (Perloff, 2001:110). He doesn't, for instance, focus on the culture of a particular group or the organisational structure of a political movement. He focuses on border situations and thresholds. For Bhabha, it is in border situations that newness enters the world. Also, the social world arguably comes into existence through inbetweenness. This is because inbetweenness is vital to the construction of the subject in language (see above, 119-20). In a way, inbetweenness is the last remaining universal – the last thing which is general to everything. Bhabha tries to think of generality as something interstitial. In other words, the inbetween space is itself generality. The general is a kind of 'contingent conditionality' which 'comes between' things (TT, 110). The only thing people actually have in common is the inbetween space in which self and other are co-constituted. Each person, says Bhabha (following Kristeva), is 'fated to remain the same *and* the other' (ONO, 1).



Dusan Bicanski, "Light on door at the end of tunnel"

Bhabha argues that political empowerment and the 'enlargement of the multiculturalist cause' result from border thinking. These political goals require that we pose 'questions of solidarity and community from the interstitial perspective' – that is, the perspective of the inbetween point (LC, 3). 'Post' language (poststructuralism, postcolonialism, postmodernism, postfeminism, post-Marxism) is only empowering if it is able to transform its 'gesture to the beyond' – the break implied in being after something – into an expanded site of experience and empowerment connected to the beyond (LC, 4). For Bhabha, this nominalised 'beyond' is encountered in inbetweenness. Inbetweenness points to something outside existing categories. The ideas of constitutive lack and co-constitution are meant to aid the recognition and inclusion of marginalised groups. 'The recognition of the subject as "same and other" complicates Ethical Life with the recognition of "the rights of others" - aliens, residents and citizens"', and hence, the disunity of the "nation" (ONO, 2). It does this, however, at the cost of placing *both* the outgroup and the ingroup in a state of constant strangeness and discomfort.

Radical politics is thus mainly about opening inbetween spaces. The only real social transformation is the invention of newness (LC, 8). And newness always comes from inbetween spaces. Bhabha's model of a 'social (or socialist) imaginary' (LC, 253) involves keeping open the inbetween space and being constantly aware of contingency. It blocks the 'totalisation' or closure of social identities and discourses. This position doesn't so much change the dominant discourse as render it more open and fluid. Instead of revolution, Bhabha proposes 'initiation', based on the distance between event and meaning (LC, 254). Bhabha thinks we should use the inbetween zone to open up meanings of existing categories.

This theory of change explains Bhabha's ambivalent belief in the progressive nature of post-Fordist or neoliberal trends. Bhabha does not fully support neoliberal capitalism. He sees it as part of colonialism. But he also sees it as opening up inbetween spaces which are conducive to progressive change. Liminal or border situations are particularly common

today. Today's postmodern world is typified by border experiences. We (people living in postmodernity) exist with a shadowy sense of having survived modernity, on the borders of a world with no proper name (LC, 1). Globalisation, and the collapse of 'modern' ideas, have created a border space. This space points to the future – although possibly in a Derridean, unachievable sense (see below, 304-8). There is a compulsion to 'move beyond', to turn the present into the 'post' or the future (LC, 18).

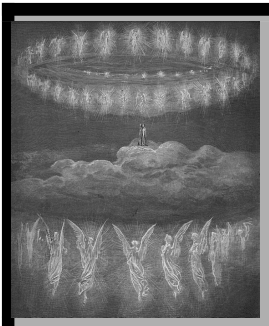
Writing in the 1990s, Bhabha conceived postmodernity as a revisionary time, in which the basis for community can be rewritten (LC, 7). The globalisation of culture has effects which produce border zones. In a border zone, differences are able to coexist and become intimate. As a result, differences undermine binary oppositions (LC, 13). They exist as a kind of continuum or extra-conceptual plane of existence. For instance, world literature is a site where cultural dissensus and difference can be articulated, and historical traumas displayed (LC, 12). Bhabha describes the 'between' as a 'very interesting place of enunciation' (VT, 71), an interesting site from which to speak.

Why are identities always haunted by incompleteness? The simple answer is: because of the language model (see above, 81-5). Bhabha does not say so directly, but it makes sense to read him as thinking that reality is a continuum. Two distinct spaces or categories are always really part of a single, continuous plane or force which constitutes everything. Things appear separate because of the functioning of language. However, we can't simply overcome this mistaken way of seeing by getting back to reality as a continuum. We are always inside language, and can't get outside it. Language is an objective structure which exists outside us. So we have to keep thinking of things, and ourselves, in separated terms. The best we can do to redress this error is to keep disrupting language, and reminding ourselves that categories aren't really distinct.

In the Margins: Derrida's 'to-come'

In his late works (from the 1990s onwards), Derrida promoted a messianic theory of 'democracy to come'. The 'to-come' (*à venir* – a play on *avenir*, the French word for the future) does not refer to a literal future but a moment which never comes. It refers to the openness of the future as such. It is a horizon which encourages people to achieve partial improvements by moving towards it, but which can never actually be reached. It also operates as a kind of 'promise' which people can draw on to elaborate particular demands. The future, like language, is always open and unpredictable. The to-come is similar to, but distinct from, a regulative ideal towards which concrete arrangements tend (as in Kant or Weber). The difference is its open-endedness, the fact that it cannot be defined as a principle or a rule. It is not something that can be known in the "here and now".

Derrida's theory of deferral suggests that meaning is never present. A statement always defers part of its meaning to the future (see below, 304-5). The 'to-come' is related to this. It is always present in the statement as its final realisation – but final realisation is impossible. Indeed, realisation – or its illusion – is the worst that can happen. It means that the Other has been appropriated by the Self and is no longer Other. Such a closure of thought



Gustave Doré, The Divine Comedy illustration.

and being is the worst evil conceivable, according to Derrida. It attempts to close off the undecidability which is inherent to existence, and thus produces a lot of unnecessary violence. It also necessarily means that 'other others' must be excluded. The future must be kept open, at any cost. Or rather, the future is already open, and we must accept this at any cost.

'Democracy to come' is a kind of future openness which is as yet undefined. It is contrasted with the idea that democracy already exists or that a normative foundation for democracy can be found. Derrida believes this openness is inherent to the concept of democracy itself. Democracy needs the statistical calculation of majorities, but it is not limited to this. It is rule by "the people", a category which is always open to new formulations. A democracy is infinitely perfectible and never reaches perfection. One constantly criticises democracy in the name of democracy, i.e. of a democracy-to-come. However, the openness of the future can also lead to less democracy, to restrictions on democracy. The 'democracy to come' might be a deferred democracy or an unrecognisable democracy. Indeed, democracy is still 'rule' (*kratos*), still a state, and every state is excessive and abusive. For Derrida, there is something of the rogue state in all states.

So why doesn't Derrida's theory lead to anarchism, instead of democracy? The answer lies in the aporias which make a liberated future impossible as well as necessary. We see this in Derrida's *Force of Law* (see below, 683-90). Justice is always 'to-come'. It is a goal towards which the law aspires. However, the law cannot achieve justice. It's the same with democracy. Democracy is inherently 'suicidal'. There are two ways democracy can commit suicide. It can permit an anti-democratic party to take power democratically. For example,

Hitler took power using democratic processes. Or it can suspend democratic processes to keep such a party out of power. For example, in the 1990s, the Algerian army seized power to stop political Islamists from taking power after they won an election. These problems also arise at a microsocial level. Democratic states try to suppress anti-democratic or unconstitutional activities, and often destroy democracy or "chill" dissent in the process. The 'autoimmune' responses by which democracy defends itself tend to destroy the things which make it worthwhile to begin with. Democracy also tends to 'commit suicide' by seeking to exclude the difference it depends on. It restricts 'the people' to particular 'others' and excludes 'other others', such as migrants. Derrida seems, in his essays on democracy, to be arguing against the securitised responses to "terrorism" and migration which have corroded democracy in the 2000s.

The same idea of an unachievable "to-come" appears in Derrida's discussion of migration and hospitality. Derrida is in favour of open borders, but at the same time, believes that absolute openness is impossible. He calls for 'unconditional hospitality' – letting everyone in, without conditions. However, he also sees this demand as impossible. For example, even if refugees are allowed in, they are then recognised and given papers. And if people are let in unconditionally, then there isn't reciprocity – which for Derrida, defines hospitality. In the Derridean model, hospitality means that the guest becomes host in turn, since they are accepted unconditionally. But, a guest might not return the hospitality of the host – at which point there is no longer unconditional hospitality. It is therefore impossible to let everyone in, to be unconditionally hospitable to everyone, or to create a globalised world without borders. But this impossibility is also 'to-come'. It is something which is desirable as a horizon. This means that we can never reach the point of being satisfied that we've realised justice. Derrida is determined to always keep people one step short of actually having done their duty. He seems very invested in the superego.

Derrida's approach is sometimes characterised as 'messianic'. It plays on the theme of the 'coming messiah' in Jewish theology. Messianism is appealing, in offering hope in a political context which often seems hopeless. However, it is not clear that a messiah who never comes is at all liberating. The 'coming' or 'to-come' has reappeared in works such as '*The Coming Community*' (Agamben, 1993), '*The Coming Insurrection*' (Invisible Committee, 2008) and '*For the City Yet to Come*' (Simone, 2004). But these aren't strictly speaking Derridean works. While always messianic, the term 'coming' or 'to-come' does not necessarily carry the implication of impossibility which Derrida's concept entails. Derrida's ideas also find expression in Obama's idea of a 'More Perfect Union', in which the American Dream is conceived as an unfinished work. This helps to show the limits of Derrida's approach, because Obama effectively raised hopes which were shattered once he took power. His campaign was heavy on soaring aspirations and light on policies, meaning that supporters projected onto his agenda whatever they wished. Most of them were necessarily disappointed by what they got (see below, 390-1).

I am sceptical as to whether Derridean messianism actually leads to progressive politics. Firstly, it strengthens the superego at the expense of the id, and the Other at the expense of the Self. This ultimately disempowers concrete others who are never identical with the category of the Other. Concrete 'others' may themselves resist being assigned infinite unmeetable responsibilities. And at this point, an ideology which is meant to be all about the other actually disempowers and excludes the other. Secondly, it leads to a blasé acceptance of a position of continuing to commit injustice and fall short of responsibilities, provided one feel sufficiently humble about it. And

> in fact, this acceptance that one "always" fails, that law "never" provides justice, that states are "always" unjust and abusive (but necessary), saps critical theory of much of its critical force as a condemnation of existing social orders. It is reminiscent of Barthes' analysis of 'Operation Margarine' (1972:41-2) – one recognises a little evil to ward against rejection of the system itself. Aporia-mongering destroys the definitive nature of political action. It saps concrete goals – such as abolishing borders – of the force which comes from the possibility of their realisation. At best, they are turned into rhetorical underpinnings for winning limited reforms. The 'to-come' keeps the other as other, at the expense of rendering social problems insoluble.

In the Derridean model of textuality which Bhabha endorses, writing is always split and ambivalent. Since Bhabha sees all social life as being at root a kind of writing, this means that ambivalence, or lack of direct meaning, is characteristic of everything. Everything is rhetoric and metaphor, without a literal referent. Everything is ultimately meaningless, and held together arbitrarily. The 'political', for example, is an effect of discursive ambivalence without which it would be impossible (LC, 24). Bhabha's ontology is absolutely inescapable. There is no hope here that people could find another way of doing things than the eternal repetition of the discursive devices which produce binary oppositions and so on. The radical gesture consists simply in recognising that such devices are necessary but ultimately ungrounded – rather than binaries reflecting objective realities. This alters one's relationship to binaries, rather than binaries themselves. Increasingly, one becomes invested in the performance of language, ambivalence, and subversion. This provides a pro-systemic stake for radicals. The system cannot be overthrown, but it can be sublimated.

In Bhabha's theory, the space of the beyond (and hence of social transformation) is also the space of the inbetween (LC, 7). As long as things remain in fixed categories, change is impossible. But change is always possible, because fixed categories are haunted by *difference*. Things change when one writes 'from the middle of difference', from the inbetween zone (MM, 435). For Bhabha, ambivalence disrupts all forms of authority. These include representation, authorship, authorisation and regulation (RA, 61). Since power is based on identity-boundaries, the act of going beyond a boundary is revolutionary. It is unknowable and unrepresentable, because it breaks down the categories through which people see and construct the world (LC, 4).

The truth is not possessed by one side in a binary. Rather, it is always marked by the ambivalence of its process of construction (LC, 22). This is presumably because the two sides of a binary always require one another (see above, 119-20). In other words, the truth is always hybrid. It arises at the intersection of the categories through which it is constructed. Bhabha therefore calls for living with and through contradiction, and using it for social agency (TT, 32). To produce radical effects, one should set out from within dominant discourses' internal ambivalence or inbetween space (MM, 440). He also treats the reversed gaze of the extimate other as a kind of truth. It brings to light the primal exclusion through which an illusory transparent identity is created (LC, 110).

The effects of deconstructing binaries and entering inbetween spaces are taken to be radical and transformative. Outside binarising language, one finds oneself in a twilight zone. This zone is characterised by a chaotic flow of signifiers, rather than an ordered discourse (Xie, 1996:160). In effect, one ends up in the space of psychosis, as defined by Lacan and as aesthetically performed by Beckett. This space enables someone to interpret colonial signs outside the 'syntax of modernity' (1996:162). In other words, it frees signs from their place in a particular language and the system of social control it is part of. This image of a textual 'field of endless play' is offensive to critics such as Lawrence Phillips (1998). Phillips argues that such a view hides the material forces and practices involved in social power. An escape from powerful forces which is enacted through textual moves does not lead to a real-world escape from power. It is also objectionable to psychoanalysts such as Easthope (1998a, 1998b), who see it as romanticising psychosis and exaggerating its power.

In a sense, everything is always the same. Ambivalence or inbetweenness exists in all cultures. But it is handled in different ways. This means that cultures have different relationships to the ambivalence on which they are founded. In totalitarian cultures, ambivalence is articulated as paranoia. These cultures constantly explore the limits of their power (RA, 61). Ambivalence can also be experienced as anxiety. And it can be experienced as an opportunity. In Bhabha's account, inbetweenness is inherently traumatic

and anxiety-inducing. It is a 'disjunctive and disrupted' experience of the world (MM, 439). Although this sounds like an account of suffering, Bhabha treats it in a strangely sublimated way, as something desirable and radical. It is desirable because of its epistemological value. It reveals the ambivalence which, according to Bhabha, is ontologically basic. 'The discourse of the minority reveals the insurmountable ambivalence that structures the *equivocal* movement of historical time' (LC, 157). It is because of this philosophical value that the gesture is desirable.

By "sublimation", I'm referring to a Freudian concept in which forbidden impulses are given socially permitted outlets. I'm also referring to a Kantian concept in which everyday experiences are experienced as "sublime" - as transcendent, supernatural, or mystical. When I say that Bhabha sublimates suffering, I don't mean this in the strict Freudian sense. I mean that Bhabha attaches a kind of transcendental ethical and existential *meaning* to forms of suffering such as anxiety, panic, and trauma. They aren't simply suffering, which is undesirable – they're *valuable* suffering, for a higher good. This paradoxically allows someone who goes along with Bhabha's theory to ambivalently *enjoy* (or get *jouissance* from) such negative affects. To an adherent, the suffering in a sense *doesn't matter* because it carries a higher existential significance. This type of sublimation occurs in many religious responses to suffering and in militaristic views of death, among other examples. For example, some Christians believe that suffering in "this life" doesn't matter because goodness is rewarded in the afterlife.

Of course, people who sublimate their suffering also keep suffering as well as enjoying. Hence, one of the social functions of sublimation is to help people cope under otherwise unbearable pressure. Under enough pressure, such coping fails. For example, soldiers who believe passionately in patriotic sacrifice can still become traumatised in war. But the barrier against people's being overwhelmed by suffering is raised; their resilience is arguably increased. Another function is to provide a sense of meaning and purpose, which people seem to need, but which neoliberal capitalism largely frustrates. Deconstructive

theory is unusual in finding meaning in the very fact of meaninglessness. And still another function is to prevent revolts against the social conditions which cause present forms of suffering. The main negative consequence of the sublimation of suffering is that it stops suffering being challenged. It makes the most of suffering, rather than taking away its causes. It encourages fatalism and quietism, rather than revolt. For this reason, the sublimation of suffering is usually a conservative move. Sublimation requires that the ego, which seeks to reduce danger, and the id, which seeks pleasure, be beaten down as much as possible. It relies strongly on the superego, which uses an internal morality (or "ethics") to hold down both ego and desire.

In order to sublimate suffering in a manner effective for people who view themselves as radicals, Bhabha associates the collapse of meaning with the weakening of oppressive forms of social power. Hence, Bhabha somehow transmutes the experience of passivity and anxiety into an ecstatic moment, a defeat for power. This move makes sense if one remembers that Bhabha conceives power mainly in discursive terms – as an effect of the ego and its fixed identities. He also thinks of people mainly as effects of external relations in a field of cybernetic feedback. And in these terms, subjective suffering is irrelevant. The point is to disrupt the mechanisms through which power functions. Primarily, this means disrupting fixed meanings. Meanings are somehow guarded by authoritarian actors, to keep them fixed in place. Deconstruction serves to break apart this fixation of meaning (Byrne, 2009:53).

Bhabha's idea of liminality (another term for inbetweenness) is borrowed from Victor Turner (1967, 1974). Turner is an anthropologist who studied indigenous rituals. He argued that such rituals have an 'Orphic' level in which 'things cease to signify other things' because 'everything is' - an experience of the immediacy of existence (Turner, 1992:57; Kalua, 2009:23). "Orphic" refers to Orpheus, a legendary poet and musician able to charm and transform people and things using music. Orphic poetry was used in liminal rituals in ancient Greece. In contrast to Bhabha, Turner plays up the ecstatic and euphoric aspects of liminal experiences. He also emphasises how social systems integrate and manage liminal moments to minimise rupture. Bhabha's idea of liminality is more focused on negative affects. When he talks about 'rites' of 'initiation', it is in terms of unhomeliness (LC, 9). But there are still hopeful moments too.

In the Margins: Victor Turner and Liminality

Early painting of a Siberian shaman.

The idea of ***liminality*** (inbetweenness) in Bhabha's work is partly derived from the work of the anthropologist Victor Turner. Turner is one of the founders of interpretive anthropology. He did his fieldwork with the Ndembu people of Zambia. He studied rituals in Ndembu society – particularly rites of passage. According to Turner, Ndembu society had a number of social roles. But people sometimes had to pass between roles – for example, when they passed from childhood into adulthood. In these

moments, people passed through the "liminal zone". A particular type of ritual was used to help people to enter and pass safely through this zone.

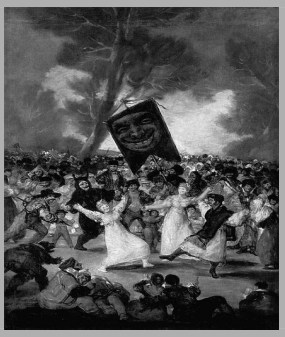
"Liminal" and "liminality" come from the Latin word "limen", meaning a threshold. Liminal rituals are rituals in which people pass over a threshold or boundary. Turner takes the idea from the folklorist Arnold van Gennep. Van Gennep considers liminal moments mainly as rites of passage. They either mark passages of time (for example, entering into adulthood) or a change in status (for example, weddings or coronations). His version of liminal rituals has three stages. Firstly, the person or group undergoing change suffers a metaphorical death or loss. They leave something of their old life behind. Secondly, they undergo a liminal experience by following a strictly defined script, usually under the guidance of a ritual master. Thirdly, they are reincorporated into society or the normal world as a "new" person or group.

The part of the theory which is most relevant to Bhabha is the experience of inbetweenness during liminal rituals. In the liminal zone, Turner says that people are "betwixt and between", neither one thing nor the other. People in this zone have lost their pre-ritual identity. But they have not yet acquired the new identity they are heading towards. They "stand at the threshold" between the two. Other aspects of the experience reinforce this sense of being in a kind of inbetween state. For example, grotesque images of monsters are often used in liminal rituals. Monsters represent the liminal zone because they are inbetween humans and other creatures, such as animals or gods. Liminal ceremonies are not at all simple or "primitive". They are very complex. They are also not irrational as such, though they are not based in rational processes. They attempt to connect people to the level of existence at which everything is in flow, continuous with everything else, and changeable.

Turner believes that liminal experiences give rise to a kind of arcane knowledge – which he calls 'gnosis'. By accessing 'gnosis', people can change their social status. For example, someone can become a king, or a hunter, or a shaman. People need to pass through a liminal experience in order to change their status and take on a new role. A liminal ritual can involve a change in someone's "being" - their basic, "essential" nature as defined by themselves and/or their society. This is why liminal rituals are used as ways to impress social roles onto individuals. It is as if the ritual summons the spirit of the role and infuses it in the individual, possessing them with its spirit and transforming what they are.

Liminal rituals lead to an experience Turner calls "communitas". This is more than simply being part of a community. It involves an experience of togetherness or fusion in which the usual separations between different kinds of people break down. People become equal and are connected directly, without the mediation of social categories. For example, some indigenous groups have rigid boundaries between age-groups, genders, lineages (family descent groups), or between elders and younger people. Members of different groups don't interact, or only interact in socially defined ways, or there's hierarchies where members of one group are meant to defer to the other. During liminal rituals, these separations slip away. Hierarchies break down. People might call themselves by less formal names or pronouns, or talk to their elders the same way they talk to their friends.

Hence, there is something democratising or anarchic about liminal rituals. They are needed for socially conservative functions of preserving and transferring social roles – since nobody is born with the skills of a hunter or a king. Communitas is necessary for people of different statuses to undergo the common experience of a liminal ritual. But they are also ways to "juggle" or rearrange categories. They show that categories are constructed and can be changed. Communitas often also gives rise to intense feelings of connectedness and joy. Liminal processes often involve letting go of aspects of social and individual identity. They sometimes involve seclusion from the community, tests or trials, humility (loss of ego), and the blurring of conventional boundaries, including gender.



Goya, "The Burial of the Sardine", 1812

Turner believes that, during liminal processes, the usual limits to thought, action, and self-knowledge are overcome. The structure of society itself – the social and symbolic order – is suspended for the duration of the ritual. Communitas and liminality are aspects of what Turner calls "antistructure". They are counterposed to, even though they often help to sustain, the normal social structure. They are also ways to reincorporate people into the community after they have been separated from it. However, Turner also emphasises that liminal zones exist partly to show the dangers of social breakdown or chaos. They reinforce the social order by providing experiences of disorder which are sometimes frightening or overwhelming.

Although anthropologists argue over the adequacy of Turner's approach, rituals of the type he studies are not unique to the Ndembu. Similar rituals and liminal zones exist in a lot of societies. For example, in some Native American societies, young people traditionally journey into the desert on a vision-quest as a rite of passage. In other groups, they might starve themselves, go without sleep, or take drugs such as peyote to bring on visions. Others use pain, or exhausting dancing for days on end. Some liminal experiences involve communing with spirits for reasons such as healing or prophecy. They can be used to appease or commune with the dead. Or they can be used to "become possessed" by the spirits of animals, ancestors, or supernatural beings. Some people believe they can obtain magical powers through liminal experiences. For example, they might journey to the supernatural world and bring back knowledge or carry out a cure. Or they might take on the attributes of an animal and become intuitively more stealthy or fierce.

Liminal moments have not necessarily disappeared. Countercultural events such as free festivals provide spontaneous forms of communitas. A type of communitas also arises in radical and utopian social theories and movements. Turner believed that people need these kinds of liminal moments. They are a necessary part of a self-actualised life. He was writing at the peak time of the hippy movement in the west – and he believed this movement fulfilled the need for liminal experiences. Western society otherwise seems to lack rites of passage. Social roles (such as jobs and living arrangements) change a lot in modern societies. But people don't usually dance for days or enter trances to accomplish shifts in social roles. Various current and historical practices contain aspects of Turner's kind of liminality: marriage ceremonies, school and university graduations, job interviews, coronations, presidential inaugurations, hazing rituals, military conscription, funerals, and eighteenth or twenty-first birthdays, to mention a few obvious ones. However, these practices seem far more mundane than those theorised by Turner. They don't involve the same psychological intensity and disruption of social order that other liminal practices have.

As a result, new forms of liminal practice have arisen. Authors like Jung, Rogers and Irigaray see therapy as a liminal process. People undergoing psychoanalysis or existential therapy are often in a trance-like state. Also, many young people are attracted to the intense transformative experiences of raves and free festivals, militant protest, drug use, or spectacular risk-taking. For example, accounts of riots and militant occupations reveal life-changing liminal aspects to the experience. Jeffrey Juris observes experiences of 'communitas' in summit protests (2008:66), while Hetherington describes the feelings of 'authentic, unmediated personal relationships' arising in

radical social movements (1998:93-4). For instance, one of the participants in the Prague summit protest of 1999 suggests: 'There was a pre-Prague and a post-Prague in my life' (Juris, 2008:75). Another describes the Gleneagles summit protest in 2005: 'It was as if all my training, all my learning and previous experience had led me to this point; as if it was all preparation for this one, decisive act of resistance to capitalism' (Burton, 2005:278). In British eco-protests, 'many local people talk of their lives having been completely changed by the experience' (Do or Die 10, p. 14). Participants in the Greek revolt of 2008 suggest: 'those of us who lived those moments have changed, we have been transformed forever' (Anon., 2010:205). The intense, fluid emotions of direct-action protest produce transformative experiences similar to those of liminal rituals. Such events feel like they take place outside normal historical time, in a type of immediate flow-time (De Angelis and Diesner, 2005). I discuss these affective processes in detail elsewhere (Robinson, 2018a). The main difference from Bhabha's model is that they pass through empowerment and decisive antagonism, rather than disjunction.

Jungians argue that self-actualisation (i.e. the emergence of a higher self) is a liminal process. It often involves the archetypal figure of the trickster, who manifests liminal power. The theme of rites of passage is often explored in popular culture – particularly the idea of the "hero's journey". Carl Jung's archetypal journey story models a liminal process. The protagonist undergoes a test or trial in which they are called to enter the unknown or go on an adventure. With the aid of a guide or of supernatural forces, they cross a threshold into the liminal zone. With the aid of helpers, they undergo challenges which culminate in a death and rebirth. They generally return to the known world with new knowledge or gifts. The Jungian scholar Joseph Campbell makes a lot of the importance of journey narratives in popular culture. George Lucas used Campbell's work as a major inspiration

for the original *Star Wars* trilogy. Other works of popular culture with a strong "journey" or liminal element include the Harry Potter series, *The Lord of the Rings*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and most children's adventure stories.

Turner uses the term "liminoid" for voluntary experiences with little self-transformative importance, which otherwise resemble liminal experiences – for example, theatrical plays and rock concerts. He suggests that modern societies have downplayed liminal rituals and instead rely on liminoid experiences for similar purposes. On a social scale, revolutionary periods are often seen as liminal for entire societies. The collapse of social order leads to a situation where social identity is redefined (Fremion, 2002). Similar concepts occur in Bakhtin's theories of carnivalesque and grotesque, and Hakim Bey's theories of altered consciousness. Carnivalesque often involves transgressions of gender, class, mind-body, and secular-profane boundaries. Deleuze and Guattari were also influenced by Turner and their image of "molecular revolution" or schizorevolutionary process may have been an attempt to formulate a type of permanent liminal zone.

Unlike Bhabha, Turner sees liminality as a temporary moment. It is a moment between the old and the new. Turner believes that liminality is too intense to be sustained for long without a structure. Either people return to the wider society, or the liminal community itself forms a social structure. People can also remain in liminal positions because they stand "outside society" in some way. They might be seen as holy (like monks and shamans) or dangerous (like countercultures). Usually, though, liminal rituals are ways to enact particular transformations in relation to a wider social order. After the ritual, people take on a new identity and pass into a new stage of life. Bhabha seems to want to keep people permanently in a liminal condition. He also seeks to leverage precarity and disjunction in neoliberalism to

produce a kind of liminal experience. However, he rejects both a passage back into "normal society" and a position "outside" it. Bhabha wants people to permanently occupy the liminal zone so as to keep reintroducing disjuncture and difference into normal society.

Aztec human sacrifice ritual, as depicted in the Codex Magliabechian

Also in contrast with Bhabha, Turner also sees liminality mainly in ecstatic terms. People undergo powerful, joyous experiences of freedom. However, later scholars generally suggest that modern types of liminality are rather different. People instead undergo existential angst and uncertainty. One reason for this may be that the entry into and exit from the liminal zone into ordinary social life no longer exist. Some writers believe that modernity is a type of permanent liminality. Identities and roles become unstable and fixed certainties melt into the air. In modernity, there is no master of ceremonies and no script for the dangerous passage through the threshold. In periods of crisis, people often rally to leaders who pose as masters and offer scripts. Bhabha seems to wish for people to give up the desire for scripts and masters, without leaving the liminal zone. This seems, in the coordinates of Turner's theory, to be an impossible wish.

A common simplification of Bhabha's position is that he says 'fixity bad, ambiguity good'. This is the general gist of his argument. But it's not as simple as 'fixity bad, ambiguity good', because in Bhabha's theory, apparently fixed positions are also always already ambiguous. Repetition already contains difference, albeit as something repressed beneath it. Both colonial power and anti-colonial resistance are ambiguous. They operate in a space on the borders between inside and outside. This space is a zone of protection, reception and projection. Hybridity is not only resistance, not only a 'joyous power' to be celebrated, but also the basis for colonial power itself (LC, 112). Colonial power is itself split and doubled – a claim which in Bhabha's view, puts him partially at odds with Derrida and Lacan (LC, 116). Even conformist, conventional representations are always ambivalent. Categories in binaries always depend on their opposite (there is no self without other), without which they cannot exist or have meaning (see above, 119-20). This renders them ambivalent. The construction of binaries therefore depends on the border space, the space of inbetweenness.

In modernity, people were able to make sense of the world through big, general categories like class and gender. In contrast, in postmodernity, people live at the border between different subject positions (LC, 1). Bhabha does not use the term, but this idea is similar to the concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989). Bhabha's discussion of subject-positions also echoes Laclau and Mouffe's (1984) post-Marxism (see below, 722-7). There are no master-concepts which can make sense of the whole world, but rather, a series of overlapping, partial categories all of which exert some force. Usually, the influence of these multiple categories is seen as complex and unpredictable – not simply as additions or multiplications. This style of theorising rejects the earlier tendency to establish one category as the main site of social analysis. Discussing interdisciplinarity, Bhabha opposes a kind of practice which combines the founding truths of two disciplines. Instead, he sees productive change happening at the outer limits of each discipline and what it allows (TT, 116). This creates a 'third space' or inbetween zone between disciplines. In 'How Newness

Enters the World' (LC, 212-235), Bhabha argues that the site of newness is the ambiguous or liminal zone. Newness always enters the world through this zone.

The creation of newness requires the overcoming of existing categories through their subversion in the inbetween zone. Categories are always artificial. None of us ever really "is" the things we're classified as, or identify as. Categories are always alienating. In contrast to writers like Stirner, however, this is not because we are actually unique and not reducible to social perceptions. It is because language is internally split. It is both continuum and separation. All forms of culture – not only progressive, migrant, or minority cultures – are 'continually in a process of hybridity' (TS, 211). They are in a hybrid state because of the process of deferral inherent in language. They thus operate in the 'third space'. This space disrupts the history of every culture. Minorities and migrants are 'the marks of a shifting boundary that alienates the frontiers of the modern nation' (LC, 164). Their experience of disjuncture is progressive, because it disrupts fixed identities. It cannot be contained within homogenised categories.

Individuals are also invested in the processes of ordering which sustain rigid power-systems. This is because people's sense of who they are is an effect of language (see Chapter 2). Identities are strategies of authority and control, which construct subjectivities or egos. “Strategy” here refers to an unconscious construct involved in psychological

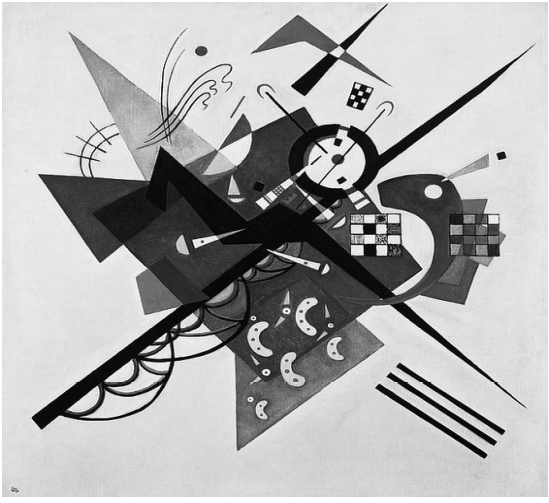
complexes, self-positioning, or self/other construction, and not necessarily a conscious or political approach. It is common in critical theory today for "strategies" to be attributed to nominalised discourses which act through people, rather than to people themselves. In general, these strategies are associated with the ego, and its attempts to retain identity and meaning. This generates various oppressions. For example, whiteness is not an attribute of people. It is a strategy of authority (Huddart, 2006:33). Thankfully, such control is never complete. There is something Sisyphus-like about the construction of identity. When people feel they 'are' something (say, black, human, an individual, a woman, a coloniser), they will soon find themselves slipping away again (Huddart, 2006:30). Because everything is founded on ambiguity, the ego builds its fortresses on quicksand. They can be disrupted by a skilled rhetorician with an understanding of the inbetween zone.

Hence, there is always some potential for identities to collapse. However, it does not happen automatically. Strategic practices are necessary to bring about collapse. One cannot expect that an identity will be undone, simply because it is constituted ambiguously. Bhabha seems to think that all identities are disjunctive and ambiguous. However, only some are disrupted. He frames many of his various concepts – mimicry, hybridity, paranoia and so on – as different types of disruption of identities based on their underlying ambiguity (RA, 62). Strategic disruption occurs from certain points of view – those which express the ambiguity of the situation. (Again, it presumably does not have to be deliberate). The emphasis on contingency and ambiguity arises because the site of inbetweenness is the site of transformation. Bhabha states that his theory is not meant to

be a celebration of lack, excess, or negative ontology for itself (FBI, 47). It also has affirmative elements. For instance, Bhabha prefers artworks which manifest syncretism and mixture (LC, 7). This suggests that the border-zone has some kind of value in itself for Bhabha. Particular syncretic contexts open up inbetween spaces with radical effects. On one occasion, he suggests that it is not the slippage of signification which is most important, but rather, the overpowering of content by the signifier (LC, 164). By this, he means the subversion of the reality-effect of language (see above, 81-6). Such a subversion makes language 'foreign' to itself (LC, 164). It is this disruption of language which Bhabha considers to the the source of subversive power.

Border identities – existing inbetween categories – are for Bhabha inherently disruptive. Culture, says Bhabha, has its 'most interesting manifestations in a state of the "misfit"'. Culturally, 'the "misfit" is often the minority. And yes I have been very interested in processes and practices of minoritization' (DH, n.p.). Translation or hybridity is a kind of heresy against essentialist identities (Byrne, 2009:44). This is exemplified, for example, by the impact of immigration on western countries. Migrant and border identities force the former imperial powers to confront their own colonial history, and their own basis in violence outside their national borders (LC, 6). However, the issue of marginality does not just affect marginalised people. Bhabha sees the disruptive structure of minority discourse as exemplary of the structure of identity and community themselves. Community is itself a zone of disruption today, as minority territory and as border-crossing (LC, 231). Migrants and minorities are strategic sites where ambivalence is intensified – but ambivalence exists everywhere.

Bhabha situates the emergence of in-between sites mainly in the field of culture. Culture involves a transition between the material and the metaphorical. In contemporary culture, this usually involves a non-totalising process of 'displacement' and 'disjunction' (LC, 5). Displacement is a Freudian term which refers to shifts in meanings or emotional investments from one site to another. In Freud's view, it usually happens to defend the psyche against a trauma at the original site. For instance, the classic Oedipal desire to kill one's father has to be repressed because it brings on fear of annihilation or castration. It might be displaced onto a desire to cut down trees (which resemble the father's penis) or to harm some category of social outsiders (who come to symbolise the father in some way). Bhabha also seems to have in mind the deferral and slippage of signifiers in Derrida (see above, 92-3, 112). Disjunction is a term taken from logic and mathematics, which roughly means the juxtaposition of two distinct or contradictory statements. Bhabha seems to use it in a sense meaning that contradictory elements are placed side-by-side. Situationist images which juxtapose a radical statement with stimuli such as adverts, as in the series Spectacular Times (Law, 1970s-80s), provide political examples of disjunction in this sense.



In the Margins: Lacan on Extimacy

Extimacy (in French, *extimité*) is a new word coined by Jacques Lacan. It combines the ideas of "external" (or "exterior") and "intimate", to refer to something which is both intimately interior and experienced as radically other, as "outside". As we have seen (above, 88-96), Lacan pioneered the account of personal identity as co-constituted with an 'other'. This idea is also central to Bhabha's work. In structuralism, words are constituted by their differences from other words. In psychology, therefore, the self has to be defined in relation to an 'other'. One type of 'other' theorised by Lacan is known as ***the Thing***. The Thing is extimate because each of us has to exclude it from ourselves in order to self-define as a subject and enter into relationships with the outside world. It is this exclusion of the Thing which creates the sense that an outside world (or a private inner life) even exists to begin with. Its formation is fundamentally violent, even murderous. It involves a kind of violence against 'the other' who is excluded. In Lacanian vocabulary, the 'subject' is strictly speaking the Thing or the void in language, not the illusory personal identity created by the ego.

The Thing is the hidden centre around which each person's life revolves. The Thing is closely related to ***the Real***, the aspect of life which isn't made sense of in the Symbolic or the Imaginary, and which causes trauma. People use their Imaginary (their subjective meanings, attachments, and fantasies) to conceal and mask the Thing, so it doesn't disrupt the functioning of their identity. Often, it reappears as a neurotic symptom. Since the exclusion of the Thing is vital to creating the distinction between inside and outside, it interferes with awareness of non-dualism. The extimate Other is like a shadow which follows a person everywhere. Because it grounds each person's identity, it is forever present. It can't be got rid of, because it's

structurally necessary. In fact, it's the deepest core of the self or 'subject'. It's the element which grounds each person's identity. In Lacan's terms, the self is "ex-centric": the centre of the self is outside it. People think they have a separate identity, but they're just effects of a series of object-relations with other people or objects. Lacan depicts extimacy as a Moebius strip: a two-sided strip in a figure of eight, where if one follows it round, one ends up on the reverse side, so that strictly speaking it only has one side. Inside and outside are parts of this continuous strip.

Most often, Lacanians use extimacy to refer to the Thing. But, in Lacanian theory, other things (possibly all things) are also extimate. One example is the body, which is both inside language and irreducible to it. Language itself is also extimate, because it both causes personal identity according to Lacan, and is really an outside, social structure. The unconscious is extimate according to Lacanians, because they see it as both internal (a psychological structure) and external (something which can be read-off from discourse, Freudian slips, jokes, politics, architecture and so on). Examples could be multiplied, and their usual use is to suggest that theorists shouldn't use the inside/outside binary in the usual way. Extimacy is a very important space in Lacanian theory in which binaries or dualisms both form, and break down. All self-other relations occur in the space of extimacy - which is thus very similar to Bhabha's inbetween space.

There's nothing scary about extimacy as such. The mere fact that something is excluded from one's usual sense of self, but is really part of it according to a theorist, does not make this excluded part bad or traumatic. For example,

there's many non-Lacanian therapies which involve recognising and reintegrating repressed memories or exiled 'parts' of the self. Jungian higher selves and figures such as the anima or animus are extimate in a way. So is God, in Augustine's medieval theology. For Christians, there is something reassuring about the idea that God or Jesus is present in all of us, as well as being an outer, worldly figure. Other spiritual traditions, such as Buddhism, suggest that real happiness lies in rejecting dualistic desires and accepting the non-dualistic, holistic nature of the universe. Bakhtinian carnivalesque (Bakhtin, 1993; Robinson, 2011a) creates a different kind of extimate, non-dualistic space where categories are inverted or collapse.

However, in Lacanian theory, the Thing is necessarily frightening. Recognising it means among other things, the symbolic "death" of the subject (oneself), and the collapse of one's sense of reality. The symbolism which Lacan and his followers use for the Thing is nearly always negative and horrific. It is like a monster, a shadow, a parasite, a wound, a foreign body, an invader, and so on. It corresponds to experiences of anxiety, trauma, *unheimlich* (unhomely) experiences, and so on. Žižek often associates it with horror movie monsters and intrusive forces in psychological thrillers – Hitchcock's birds, Norman Bates's mother and so on. It's important to Lacan that people reject the image that it's something beautiful and positive, like a soul or a Jungian higher self or God, which might also be considered to be extimate. It has to be horrific for the theory to work. Lacan seems to see himself as something akin to a Lovecraftian protagonist, who digs too deep and finds the horror which is buried beneath everyday "reality". Rejecting or traversing the fantasy that the self has a self-contained identity or that its essence is something interior or good is a crucial aspect of the Lacanian cure. This Lacanian concept of extimacy should also be distinguished from the use of the same word to refer to practices of socially

exhibiting intimate experiences (for example, on social media). This might be an example of using extimate spaces in Lacan's sense, but for Lacan, the intimate experiences were already extimate, whether or not they're kept secret. This has particular affective implications which influence the tone of Lacanian therapy and theory. If we dig down into our souls, we don't find a true self, but something horrible, monstrous, inhuman. According to Lacanians, this is why horror stories and films where people turn out to be monsters, even though they don't realise it, or where the monster is somehow tied-up with the protagonist, work so well. (Think of *Jeckyll and Hyde*, or *The Shadow over Innsmouth*). Often in horror films and bad dreams, someone will think they've shut out a monster which is chasing them by closing the door behind them. Then, they turn around and find the monster is already there in the room with them. Why do monsters in dreams and films often appear in spaces from which they've been definitively excluded? According to Lacanians, it's because monsters symbolise the Thing. They're extimate, and so they can't be shut out, because they're inside or intimately tied to the self (see Žižek, 2006). The monster is always there, the 'good' self does not really exist, and the trauma of the excluded Thing is inherent to human existence. This is why Lacanians tend to favour 'grimdark' over 'noblebright' worldviews.

Because an extimate element is both inside and outside, its existence means that the inner and outer worlds, public and private, are never really separate. This is why Lacanian scholars believe they can read off "inner" psychological structures from "outer" discourses and actions – like Bhabha does when he accuses colonisers of fetishism or disavowal. Outer conflicts are sometimes read as "acting-out" or externalising internal issues around the exclusion of the Real. For example, a nation-state might try to exclude immigrants, enemy nations, or criminals because they stand for the Thing in relation to national identity. At its limit, one might say that, for Lacanian

theory, every antagonistic 'other' is always an outside projection of the Thing (although there are also other ways Lacanians can talk about conflict). In Bhabha's work, this leads to an attempt to effectively prohibit antagonistic thought. It is used in a different way by Mouffe, who seeks to tame antagonism into 'agonism' or managed conflict, and Žižek, who values certain kinds of antagonistic splitting so as to create a new master-signifier. Despite their differences, all these theorists sharply reject any political or personal stance based on the removal of worldly obstacles to happiness. Any such worldly response is the type of "fantasy" attacked by Lacan.

What is important for Bhabha is the emergence of the space of inbetweenness. Many characters in the novels he discusses are both 'of this world' and 'not fully of it'. They represent the extimate moment within the world, which cannot be recognised or thought (WH, 152). For example, Sethe and her daughter are both inside and outside the world. The ghost (if it's really a ghost) is even more so. In another passage, Bhabha suggests that the ambivalence and anxiety of racial difference stem from both extimacy and proximity. They arise because black and white are inseparable and 'cannot be divorced' (MM, 438). Elsewhere, he argues for strategies which create a 'third dimension' between black and white, or a 'shared text' which is neither simply white nor simply black (WS, 24; Huddart, 2006:34).

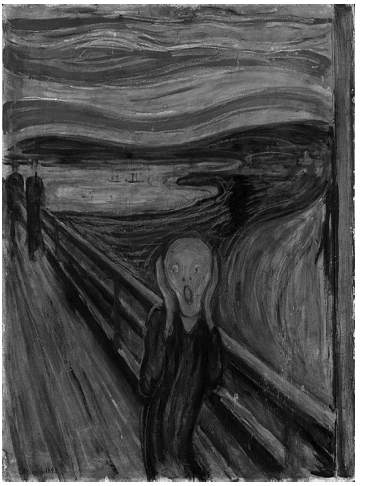
This focus on displacement has political consequences. It leads Bhabha to oppose antagonistic forms of politics. For instance, Bhabha sees the Hegelian or Marxist approach – which poses and then resolves contradictions – as at once recognising and then disavowing displacement (WS, 144). In a way, this simply repeats Bhabha's general argument for subversion rather than inversion. However, it also has a more specific

significance. The theoretical stake here is that Bhabha, like Lacan and Derrida, believes that alienation is constitutive. Hegel and Marx go part of the way in recognising that it exists, but step back from what for Bhabha is the decisive step: declaring that it cannot be overcome.

Affects of Disjuncture

Bhabha's politics is also fundamentally affective. He differentiates himself from Laclau and Mouffe (see below, 722-7) by making an argument that affect, not just linguistic articulation, motivates political movements (RF, xviii). Hence, there is a politics of transformation of affect in Bhabha's work. The transgression of boundaries which are important to identity has particular psychological effects. Bhabha values these effects, and treats them as politically desirable. Entry into an in-between zone takes people into an experience of 'unhomeliness' (LC, 9) – a term based on Freud's adjective *unheimlich* (which Bhabha also sometimes nominalises as 'the unheimlich'). *Unheimlich* (literally not-home-like) means that something feels out-of-place, disjointed, uncomfortable. The unheimlich is overexposure – a name for everything that should have remained secret and hidden, but

is exposed (LC, 10). A moment when the unheimlich emerges is a moment which connects individual histories and psychologies to wider political contradictions (LC, 11). It creates images which are divided and disorienting (LC, 9). This appears to cause subjective suffering, but for Bhabha, it is politically progressive. It makes people conscious of, or at least forces them to live in, the inbetween zone.



In 'Halfway House', Bhabha asks what it means to be at home in the world. He argues that, for displaced people, everywhere is unhomely. Nevertheless, one is forced to 'choose to belong'. This leads neither to free choice nor to authentic belonging (HH, 11). Displaced people lose their identification with particular categories. Any sense of agency they manage to achieve is necessarily derived from a position at once inside and outside dominant categories of representation, regulation and discrimination (HH, 12). There appears to be no option in Bhabha's worldview for displaced people to create new forms of life outside the dominant system. Instead, they necessarily subvert the system's categories from the inside. In a book introduction, Bhabha discusses another author's chapter on Ethiopian syncretic jazz music. 'Loss, distance, longing, separation, and relocation come together in an affective constellation to provide an anxious medium... that makes possible the iterative performance of “restorative nostalgia”', combining '”being-at-home” and “not-at-home”' (ODD, 6). The term “restorative nostalgia” is taken from the chapter itself (Shelemay, 2018:58), which discusses the emergence of 'Ethio-jazz' among

Ethiopian migrants in the US. The chapter suggests that this type of music developed as a way to process feelings of loss – a function subtly different from Bhabha's idea of permanently dwelling in melancholy.

In 'Poetics of Anxiety and Security', Bhabha celebrates anxiety and trauma as 'chiasmatic' – a structure of crossing and intersection (PAS, 61). The traumatic experience is displaced in later affects to triggers or dangerous situations. However, Bhabha does not wish to overcome such trauma. Instead he wants to turn it into a 'site of enunciation', insisting that 'anxiey is never simply overcome'. Rather, it should be used to 'open up the side-by-sideness' of disjunctive times and places (PAS, 61). Anxiety and trauma are too useful as levers to get to the inbetween zone – an almost religious imperative for Bhabha – to be simply overcome. This is made explicit at the conclusion of the article: 'it is this anxious moment of turning... within the web of human relationships, that the subject reveals... a *regard* for the neighbour. It is by way of the turn and return of the human gaze that the subject bestows attention upon, and takes care of, the neighbor as, at once, strange and close' (PAS, 70) – in other words, as the co-constituted Other of Levinasian/Derridean theory. Similarly, in 'Anxious Nations, Nervous States', Bhabha argues that anxiety produces a separation of representation from signification (i.e. symbols from signs; see below, 457-9). It disrupts the emotional attachments which constitute the ego. It is rooted in the existential challenge posed by the Other (ANNS, 207).

The affects Bhabha values are meant to lead to a particular kind of anxious, negativity-laden politics. Hence, he cites Hyppolite's idea of a 'tormented opposition between sensuousness and duty... We must therefore postulate an indefinite life for the subject continually to make moral progress"' (SS, 145). Bhabha does not question the desirability of endless moral progress – a cross between religious self-abasement and neoliberal lifelong learning. Instead, he sees it as a route to a progressive political position. 'It is the torment of this indefinite life – which introduces indeterminacy, anxiety, and contingency into the practices of ethical life and into the idea of progress itself – that enables us to

take our first steps toward an everyday vernacular cosmopolitanism', rooted in the moment before normativity is constituted (SS, 145). This is meant to lead to the kind of Levinasian ethics (see below, 683-694) which Bhabha advocates. As an ethic, it seems to offer little; it requires endless anxiety and suffering. However, it is attractive to Bhabha as an alternative to the worse scenarios arising from anger and empowerment.

The focus on language, or the 'language model' (see above, 81-5), makes it difficult to talk about affect (emotion). Bhabha nearly always writes about signification or representation as the issue at stake. This is the case even when he deals with works, such as Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, which focus on trauma and affect (LC, 16; see above, 202-11). Indeed, affect seems to exist in Bhabha's work only as a type of signification. It has no power of its own. Emotion or feelings are taken to be effects of linguistic categories. For Bhabha, the psychological or affective sphere is not entirely subjective or objective. It is a 'place of social and psych[ological] mediation' (Byrne, 2009:144). Bhabha theorises desire in Lacanian terms, as primarily oriented to recognition by others (LC, 8). Blackness, for example, is always performed in relation to whiteness. This means that alienation is unavoidable rather than objectionable. What for Fanon is an alienated aspect of black identity, for Bhabha is simply constitutive. To desire is to be considered by others. It is to be 'somewhere else and for something else', not to be 'here and now, sealed into thingness' (LC, 51). African-American culture, for example, is 'implacably "two-toned" or double-voiced' (OF, 181). Bhabha reads Blackness itself as meaning inbetweenness. 'Blackness, like the signifier, is neither the One thing nor the Other; its doubleness, traditionally misread as... duplicitous... breaks the mold' of self-other binaries (OF, 181). For example, Du Bois writes of localities with numerous marginal populations. This 'decenters the "state"' or nation by focusing on its periphery (BSDP, 148).

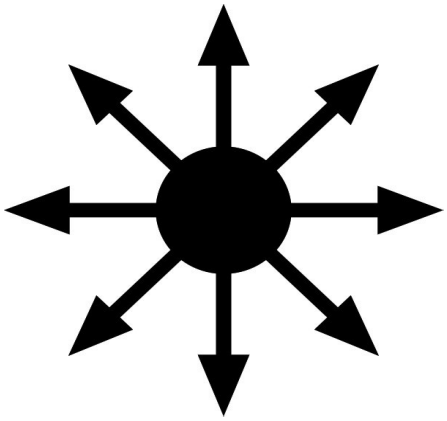
Despite his reliance on a language model, Bhabha sees affect as central to politics (SPD, 363, 386). Affect is politically important. Political movements do not simply articulate signifiers. They articulate psychological and affective motivations. These motivations can create drives for collective survival, ethics, and freedom (RF, xviii). Political analysis tends to overemphasise interest and downplay passion. For example, anger, violence and hatred play central roles in racist movements. In general, Bhabha seems to dislike both intense affirmative affects such as joy and empowerment, and projectile outward-directed affects such as anger. In his critique of Fanon's views on violence, Bhabha portrays not only violent acts, but anger itself as undesirable (RF, xl). While the anger of the oppressed is guilty by association with bin Laden (see below, 875), Bhabha also attacks the 'War on Terror' as 'the terror of war waged with the fury of trauma' (PAS, 57). It is this fury, and not militarism as such, which Bhabha blames for excesses such as civilian deaths and torture. On the other hand, to be happy or content is to be self-satisfied, which for Bhabha, is to be narcissistic and complacent. Enjoyment is always suspect. Anxiety, on the other hand, is valued as an affect of 'social transition and translation' (SPD, 387) and as 'pedagogical' - something one learns from (LC, 273). Indeed, anxiety is almost celebrated, as an experience of the inbetween space (UMLA, 12). Culture is meant to be 'uncomfortable' and 'disturbing' (LC, 175). Panic is also valued as a form of subjective breakdown (see below, 497-9). Similarly, menace is valued, since the experience of the supplement is inherently menacing (LC, 182).

In a short conference presentation included in the volume *Critical Fictions*, Bhabha asks what 'forms of language' are appropriate for today's 'neurasthenic' conditions (CF, 62). Neurasthenic means anxiety-producing. Bhabha takes the term from Tom Wolfe, and his argument is a critical engagement with Wolfe's view. For Wolfe, what is needed is clear, linear narrative to re-establish meaning. Bhabha instead appeals to Rushdie. He argues that disjuncture, metamorphosis and 'dissembling' (lying) are typical of the 'migrant condition'. These are the appropriate forms of language (CF, 62-3). In this passage, Bhabha both naturalises and celebrates as progressive the anxiety-producing nature of neoliberal modernity. He treats the anxiety-producing aspects of modern life as effects of progressive transgression by minorities.

Depression is also a valuable affect. Du Bois 'gives us courage and hope because he takes the measure of existence from its most melancholic metaphors' (BSDP, 153). There is no moment of present expressiveness for Bhabha. The 'people', for example, is simply the recurring myth of presence in nationalist discourses (SPD, 381). It is not produced through immediate practices of social movements. In another passage, Bhabha celebrates a 'melancholic midden stance that is the present', in preference to future-oriented progress and past-oriented nostalgia (ANNS, 209). Melancholy is an older term for depression. Hence, Bhabha's work counsels (and contains) an attempt to mould certain kinds of affective experiences. These are primarily, negative emotions of discomfort, lack, anxiety, melancholy, ego collapse, and the feeling of being out-of-place.

Inbetweenness is radical because it leads to a particular kind of ethical responsiveness. For Bhabha, moments of ambiguity and transition have a kind of magnetic pull. They 'demand a certain kind of ethical responsibility' (SPD, 369). Engaging with such strangeness, at the point of its enunciation, is an estranging source of ethical responsibility (ISBD, 35). It appears more common that disjuncture leads to anxiety. However, for Bhabha, anxiety is part of a passage through the liminal zone to a Levinasian ethical position. Anxiety is itself a kind of negotiation with strangeness (ISBD, 37). According to Bhabha, anxiety leads to a 'revolutionary and reparative ethical position' (ISBD, 38). In this context, Bhabha refers to Levinas's idea of the anxiety of proximity. An ethical relation arises, not based on understanding or subject-object relations, but on people's being meaningful to one another (ISBD, 38). The ethic Bhabha has in mind thus seems to be akin to those of Derrida and Levinas. It is based on a kind of openness and fidelity to the absolutely other, and a stance of passivity rather than power (see above, 95-7). It is believed by its adherents to produce a particular kind of subjective, respectful relationship to others, even though its ultimate goal is impossible. This might even involve a sharing of suffering. Bhabha maintains that certain monuments enable such a transfer of trauma. They don't just allow ameliorative witnessing. They give a sense of the death of culture on the far side of what they represent (Byrne, 2009:151; GM). There is to be no passage from 'trauma to transcendence' (LC, 97). People are to remain permanently trapped in trauma. Indeed, Bhabha calls for processes which 'traumatize tradition' as a desirable goal (LC, 179). Bhabha seeks an experience of 'living perplexity', of permanently being perplexed (LC, 157). This is the 'space and time' he tries to summon in his work.

As we have seen (above, 202-11), Bhabha's reading of *Beloved* is opposed to standard ideas of trauma and healing. Bhabha seeks a degree of persistence of trauma which is opposed by mainstream approaches. He takes a similar position elsewhere. Discussing heritages of oppression, he suggests witnessing is not enough. 'There is nothing in the ethic of ameliorative witnessing... that prepared you for the "vaccuum" that such dis-possessed cultural monuments create'. Rather, they involve an 'anxiety which has to be preserved, without which history is silenced and memory is made mute' (SS, 150). The point, therefore, is not to ameliorate but to preserve suffering. Each observer should recognise a Levinasian call, that 'there [is] no way out of it', '[t]he half-life of heritage [is] also mine to embrace' (SS, 150). This is necessary so that people can take a properly ethical (i.e. Levinasian) position. 'Only by identifying with this conflictual ambivalence... between enunciation and erasure – could I make a moral alignment between what we know now and what we should have done then' (SS, 150), even though Bhabha was not even there, and not even born then (SS, 151). A moral subject can say 'never again' only because of this 'anticipatory, proleptic nature of moral consciousness' and a memory which is 'neither redemptive nor tragic' (SS, 151). The stance Bhabha seeks, therefore, is a kind of responsibility or guilt which has no relationship to personal actions or involvement, but which instead functions as a stark superego injunction (see below, 683-694). Negative affects are necessary to make this superego-dominated personality-type possible. Without melancholy, Bhabha implies, history is forgotten and the 'Never again!' imperative fails (SS, 142). The only thing preventing the destruction of humanity is this kind of heritage which exists somewhere between tangible and intangible (SS, 150).



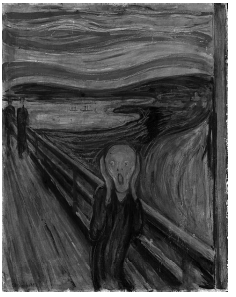
Translation, in Bhabha's sense, involves dialogue without a final judgement. Instead, it recognises that everything can be reappropriated and re-read in new ways (MM, 455). It is a process which is provisional and ongoing (Huddart, 2006:98). In *Adagio*, Bhabha argues for slowness. Slowness articulates the inbetween space, particularly the space between language and the social world. It encourages a 'resolve to make difficult and deliberate choices' in contingent contexts (A, 376). Bhabha probably does not intend to echo the rhetoric of 'difficult choices' in neoliberal ideology, although the resonance is there nonetheless. This aside, it can also be mentioned that he is not the only theorist to have proposed slowness. The high speed of the modern world interferes with mindfulness, compassion, and diligence, and a process of slowing-down is sometimes advocated as a response (see Berardi, 2009; Levi-Strauss, 1963; Zerzan, n.d.d; Virilio, 1986, 1990). In Bhabha, however, it is connected to a devaluation of the rapid, projectile affects of social struggle. As we shall see (below, 861-882), his critique of Fanon focuses on this anti-colonial scholar's embrace of anger. Instead, Bhabha looks for a 'quieter, more contemplative' message encompassing an abstract hope for freedom (WOTE, xli). Similarly, a literary character takes a deeper 'revenge' on apartheid by silently occupying the inbetween zone, than she would by being judgemental and taking revenge (LC, 14). Simply by being in the inbetween zone, she subverts the system. She becomes the Levinasian Other.

In Bhabha's theory, the transformative moment is always about discomfort, the unknown, and the 'unhomely'. The border culture he advocates is taken to conjure in specific historical conditions the 'sublime' and 'subliminal' (LC, 12). In other words, the experience of disjunction, trauma, dissensus and so on has the effect of opening a door of consciousness to something mysterious and unspeakable. Bhabha's project is thus continuous with those of Levinas, Beckett and Derrida. In these projects, negative experiences and the collapse of meaning provide the possibility for a religious experience of humility before the radically other. Bhabha sometimes seems to celebrate negative affective states. He almost romanticises anxiety, depression/melancholy, and trauma. He treats them as resistance, *jouissance* (or intense desire), and alternatives to the authoritative subject (or self). For this reason, Rose suggests that Bhabha erases the pain and violence of exclusion (1995:372). For instance, Bhabha treats anxiety as politically progressive. Anxiety produces a kind of inventive questioning, a push to change things, a crafting of agency at the point where universality scatters (MM, 444). It is a choice by the ego to dispense with certainty. The 'ec-static', emancipatory drive for a different future, arises in these conditions (MM, 448).

Examples of this ethos can be found in Bhabha's cultural analyses. For example, in Nadine Gordimer's novel *My Son's Story*, Bhabha suggests that a particular character's revenge is neither 'judgemental', nor 'to be judged'. Rather, the character takes revenge by becoming an unspoken symbol (LC, 14). Like other characters discussed by Bhabha, this protagonist also uses her border position to disguise her political activity (LC, 15). In another passage, Bhabha emphasises the pessimistic nature of social struggle. In particular, slave resistance is exemplified by infanticide, murder, and self-mutilation (LC, 16-17). These kinds of self-destructive actions symbolise the tragic, the intimate, the unhomely. Yet there is something strangely disassociated and desensitised about the way Bhabha writes. One can refer, for instance, to Bhabha's ability to talk about slave women killing their children without ever addressing the emotions involved, or seeing the act as

anything more than a symbolic gesture (see above, 202-11). Although he writes about affect, Bhabha's focus never extends beyond the linguistic/cybernetic field.

The experience of relocation creates a sense of estrangement from existing categories which, according to Bhabha, creates possibilities for change. When an event is both public and unspeakable, it can rupture 'historical composure and closure' (LC, 18). For example, transgressing boundaries in time – between past, present and future – creates an eerie but empowering experience of everything existing at once. This breaks down the subjective experience of time as a sequence of events occurring in causal relation to one another (LC, 4). For Bhabha, this view of time is part of modernity and colonialism. The experience of everything existing at once – when articulated as narrative, voice, or art – has disruptive effects on the entire colonial order.



At times, Bhabha also reflects on the affective impact of particular artworks or gestures. On these occasions, he presents his own experience as if it stands for those of all readers. For example, Bhabha asserts that '[r]emembering Fanon is a process of intense discovery and disorientation' (LC, 63), and '[t]hrough the progress of this poem "you" are continually positioned in the space between a range of contradictory places that coexist' (LC, 47-8). This seems both to elevate Bhabha's personal feelings to the status of theoretical insights, and to downplay the extent to which they are his own, *personal* feelings (and not necessarily those of other readers or viewers). His theory of positionality encourages this way of arguing.

Another part of Bhabha's affective politics is his theory of survival. Bhabha endorses Wendy Brown's view that minority perspectives can become caught in essentialism and *ressentiment* (a Nietzschean term for negative, other-focused emotions). He suggests that minority identities are often constituted by 'wounded attachments' to stigma (MM, 452). For Bhabha, a non-resentful position can only come from working through the wounding, not returning to something prior to it (MM, 453). Survival involves courageously living through a traumatic moment of flux and ending (DTDA, 20). Bhabha embraces survival as a 'very positive thing', and a central goal of politics (SPD, 388). "Survival" in this sense might be thought of in terms of a survivor identity as opposed to a victim identity. It might also be thought about in terms of surviving as opposed to flourishing or "fully living".

Even the experience of rupture arising from deconstruction is refused as a source of enjoyment. Hence, Bhabha opposes the valuing of undecidability as a 'giddy moment' of excess or breakdown (FBI, 50). There is something almost ascetic about his political style, which precludes any enjoyment even of negativity. Intense *affirmative* emotions are automatically suspect, as masks of ego and its illusions of self-presence. Paradoxically, 'impurity' becomes the valued pole in a new binary. Ambiguity is to be maintained and celebrated, rather than overcome. However, there are rare exceptions to this position. In particular, Bhabha talks about casting out colonial energies in *Beloved* (LC 16; see above, 203). Bhabha's own binarising tendencies (see above, 251-8, 264-8) provide another case in point. Bhabha's celebration of ambiguity and the subversive power of otherness exists in an unstable balance with his antagonistic rejection of colonialism. In a situation where the "self" or "primary term" is postcolonial, and the subversive "other" is colonial, Bhabha's theory begins to fray.

If Bhabha values negative emotions, how does he handle their apparently destructive effects? In an interview, Bhabha discusses ethnic cleansing and ultranationalism. He treats these phenomena as effects of a loss of orientation. This disorientation is particularly important after the end of the Cold War, and in postcolonial countries. In this context, Bhabha says that people no longer orient 'progressive' nationalisms like those of the nineteenth century (or, we might add, the anti-colonial liberation struggles). Instead they are drawn to 'impossible nationalisms' which require violence. This is reinforced by 'economic and cultural conditions'. For example, Hindu communalism coincides with the liberalisation of the Indian economy. Bhabha thinks it might be a way of redefining the nation in a way which lets Hindus capture the benefits of the free market. The market may thus have activated latent ultranationalism (MGM, 168-9). Bhabha thus paints this type of nationalism as a mixture of dysfunction arising from the distortion of Eurocentric ideologies in other times and places, and a strategic political project. It is interesting that Bhabha emphasises distribution of market benefits, and not insecurity or impoverishment. It is also interesting that he targets the entire Hindu population (of which he is not a member), and not the high-caste northern Indian elite in particular.

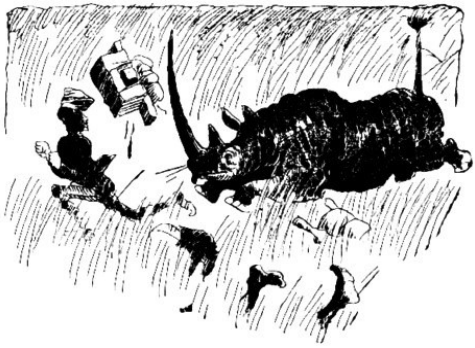
Elsewhere, Bhabha criticises the idea of ethnic conflicts as atavistic. Instead, they (and this reaction to them) express unease and anxiety in the present condition. 'We have entered an anxious age of identity, in which the attempt to memorialize lost time, and to reclaim lost territories, creates a culture of disparate "interest groups" or social movements' (CIB, 59). This leads to anxieties that identity-conflict, rather than the 'aspiration to a common democratic culture', now drives social transformation (CIB, 59). This is similar to Bhabha's account of the Rushdie affair (see below, 475-481), which Bhabha sees in terms of contemporary politics and not reactionary throwbacks. It may well reflect a real connection between loss of identities in "postmodernity", loss of modernist metanarratives, and resurgent inter-group conflict.

However, Bhabha does not recognise the similarities between the negative disorientation he views as problematic here, and the disruption and deconstruction he elsewhere celebrates. The disruption of existing identities will, of course, produce disorientation and subjective collapse, and the effects of this are predictable (see below, 733-4). The distortion of nationalism into ultranationalism is also exemplary of the kind of supplementary processes which Bhabha elsewhere embraces. It is because it passes through the 'time lag' and the 'third space' (see below, 372-3) that 'progressive' nationalism becomes predatory. (This may have been the case, even in late-developing European countries like Germany). Yet Bhabha here uses the exact splitting mechanism that he elsewhere opposes: the bad supplement corrupts the progressive original. Elsewhere, Bhabha puts such phenomena down to 'spectral sovereignty'. This is a phenomenon which arises primarily (but not exclusively) among transnational and diasporic groups. The western cult of security is also part of the same phenomenon. Spectral sovereignty provides a 'furious affective and imaginative sense of "national" belonging, often theological and political at the same time' (SS, 143). It is not, in his view, a remnant of earlier nationalisms. Rather, it is a particular constellation of affects constructed today, as a 'semblance of the past' (SS, 143).

In 'Anxious Nations, Nervous States', Bhabha blames Hindu communalism on the internal contradictions of colonialism. It is the time-lag (see below, 374), the simultaneous existence of past and present, which 'turns tradition into a turbulent reality' (ANNS, 201). This is why the twenty-first century seems still plagued by the political and cultural agendas of the nineteenth, such as race and religion (ANNS, 201). Racism, or the production of oppressed minorities, is actually the 'other side', the supplement or Thing (see above, 326-30, 357-364), of the idea of the nation as a consensual community (ANNS, 202). Quoting Tom Nairn, Bhabha argues that the apparently archaic 'returns' of a colonised other which does not reflect European reason keeps reappearing in such a way as to 'undermine and thoroughly discredit Western rationality' (ANNS, 207). The racialised others of national discourse keep reappearing and 'reveal[ing] the fragile, anxious apparatus of national affiliation that can suddenly turn the nation's... insiders into outsiders' (ANNS, 208). He also argues that Hindu communalists felt threatened by the Ayodhya mosque (the destruction of which was followed by pogroms against Muslims) because it symbolised a 'vernacular, democratic Islam' (ANNS, 204). This is similar to Bhabha's claim that it was Rushdie's hybridity and cosmopolitanism that fundamentalists found threatening (see below, 481-2). The idea that chauvinists are actually attacking hybridity and cosmopolitan democracy rather than other social groups is convenient for Bhabha. It places his own agenda right at the centre of contemporary events which seem to run against it.

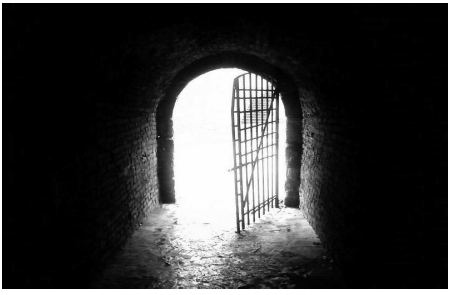
In analysing the Rwandan genocide, Bhabha argues that it was based on 'projective inversion'. In other words, participants projected their own hatred onto the enemy, who they thus feared were about to massacre them. At this point, people would act pre-emptively, to massacre the enemy before they could act (WR). In Rwanda, rhetoric was itself an agent of violence (WR). In psychoanalytic terms, the rhetorical element converts the inner death drive into 'unbearable anxiety' and a sense of terror which engulfs both sides in a feeling of imminent violence (WR). Despite this process, Rwandans on both

sides retained a sense of the value of the commonplace. This has allowed them to rebuild their lives as a shared 'community of fate' (WR, n.p.). Bhabha here discusses a common aspect of genocidal politics. Similar dynamics are occurring today regarding 'terrorism', and the use of state repression and state terror to pre-empt and avert it. They are also observable, for instance, in the ethnic cleansing of Rohingya in Myanmar. On another occasion, he says the same about the Yugoslav wars. 'The hideous extremity of Serbian nationalism proves that the very idea of a pure, "ethnically cleansed" national identity can only be achieved through the death... of the complex interweavings of history' (LC, 5). But does a single instance of genocide really prove that pure identity is *always* genocidal?



Bhabha takes the opposite position regarding communal conflict in colonial-era Indian peasant movements. Here, the combination of inter-group hostility and anti-elite struggle is taken as a positive element of ambiguity. It subverts the Marxist and liberal accounts of peasant revolt, which focus on the anti-elite element alone (LC, 187). It seems contradictory that inter-communal violence can be valued in one case but not another, but for Bhabha, political significance is primarily textual. It resides in the impact of an event on dominant meanings. The same kind of event can thus be progressive or reactionary depending on the surrounding discourses. Yet the Rwandan genocide also had a traumatic effect on western observers. It disrupted fantasies of a new world order and left local western officials feeling powerless (see Razack, 2004). Even by his own criteria, Bhabha thus seems to contradict himself.

The idea of hybridity is perhaps the most frequently used of Bhabha's many names for inbetween zones. According to Bhabha, hybridity offers a particular 'provocation' (BWRAO, 17). It is not to be taken as simply referring to any phenomenon of mixture (people of mixed ethnic origins, Creole languages and so on). It is also not about diversity, or multiple identities, tastes or fashions (SPD, 390-1). The concept thus has an abstract dimension which limits its scope. It refers to a liminal zone within subjectivity. It is not a synthesis of self and other. Rather, it disrupts the self-other binary. It articulates the contradictions inherent in dominant linguistic categories (Rose, 1995:367). It is about negotiating between different texts or cultures in an unequal situation, in a way which provides possibilities for the worse-off (SPD, 390).



The concept of hybridity involves an attempt to disrupt meaning, without resorting to a depth model. Hybridity has no perspective of 'depth' or 'truth' (LC, 113). It operates entirely on the surface of discourse. It does not resolve the contradiction within a binary. Instead, it carries out displacement. It shifts a signifier from 'symbol' to 'sign'. In other words, it shifts a concept from something fixed to something fluid. This is how it supposedly undermines the authority to represent and command (LC, 114). It is a position in between existing positions (Easthope, 1998a:147). The subversive power of hybridity will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7, which connects hybridity to the internal contradictions of colonialism.

Antony Easthope argues that Bhabha's idea of hybridity is drawn from Bakhtin. It refers to multi-voiced or 'polyvocal' texts which do not have a dominant narrative voice. Hybridity is defined against the 'Cartesian subject'. This is a particular idea of the subject, or self, as self-present - 'I think, therefore I am' (see above, 111-12). For Bhabha, the subject is constructed in relation to an other, which it is defined against. Hybridity as a concept is itself defined against the non-hybrid. Something is hybrid because it has no unitary or original identity or presence (Easthope, 1998b:342). Bhabha sees Cartesian subjectivity as central to western culture. Hybridity therefore disrupts and opens up western culture. An intervention is progressive (desirable) if it challenges the unity and identity of culture or history (LC, 37). According to Easthope, hybridity is Derridean difference applied to colonial texts (1998b:343).

Migrants and Minorities

Hybridity thus has a general meaning as a synonym for inbetweenness. However, Bhabha also talks about concrete groups whose experience embodies a border experience, and who spontaneously engage in border thought. They include exiles, migrants and diasporas of all kinds, from displaced peasants and indigenous peoples to refugees and labour migrants, including elite migrants such as Bhabha himself (LC, 5). Terminology in the fields of migration and ethnicity is rather complicated, because there are different reasons for migration, different legal categories of migrants, and also minorities who have never migrated. Generally, a 'migrant' or 'immigrant' is someone who moves from one country to another, for whatever reason. However, westerners who move abroad are rarely called immigrants. 'Immigrant' has a negative connotation in most western countries' public discourse because of widespread racism, and common linguistic associations with illegality and social problems. 'Refugee' may refer to someone fleeing persecution or some other recognised horror. Or it might just refer to people given the legal status of 'refugee'. It has

a more positive connotation than 'immigrant'. Mainstream media usually distinguish refugees from 'economic migrants' or 'labour migrants' who move looking for work or better living conditions. Some radicals refer to poorer economic migrants as 'economic refugees' since they're fleeing a particular kind of humanitarian horror (poverty).

There are also 'elite migrants' who are skilled workers or professionals and who are often encouraged by western countries to migrate from poorer countries. They generally migrate legally and are treated better than other groups of migrants. Critics refer to this phenomenon as a 'brain drain' from poorer countries. 'Displaced people' also include people who are 'internally displaced' within a single country – for example, by wars or land grabs. 'Exiles' are people who live away from what they see as their homeland, particularly if they are unable to return. A 'diaspora' is term for a group of people living outside their homeland, usually dispersed across numerous locations. For example, African-American, African-Caribbean and black British people (among others) are termed the African diaspora. The term originally refers to Jews dispersed through Europe and the Middle East after the Roman conquest of Palestine, who maintained a sense of themselves as an exiled community. 'Minorities' also include other groups who are inside a nation-state but were born there. They might be descendants of migrants, descendants of smaller groups absorbed in a growing nation-state, or descendants of original populations who are

outnumbered by later migrants, or 'settlers'. 'Indigenous people' are usually descendants of original inhabitants of what became a settler-colony, or people traditionally living in particularly attuned, localised ways (e.g. hunter-gatherers and pastoralists). Bhabha tends to use these categories interchangeably, along with those of 'colonised' and 'subaltern' peoples.

These groups are taken to have particularly hybrid worldviews which Bhabha takes to be similar to his own. He claims there is 'overwhelming evidence' that migrants have a more 'transnational and translational' view of identity than sedentary groups (LC, 5). He does not present the evidence for this, and it is not consistently supported in the literature (see below, Chapter 8). However, it is clearly true in some cases. Bhabha has an explanation for this. He argues that migration involves an 'anxiety of displacement' which 'troubles national rootedness' (ISBD, 34). Anxiety keeps visible both the place of origin and the place to which someone is displaced. It leads to a kind of 'strangeness and contradiction' which can only be negotiated, not negated (ISBD, 35). Migration also creates inbetween zones because it exists outside of linear history. Migrants experience disruption in their sense of time, as if blasted out of the continuum of history (LC, 8). Bhabha (in my view wrongly) associates this with Benjamin's (1940) moment of *jetztzeit*, a ruptural moment which escapes linear time. For Benjamin, this is a moment which suspends social determinants and positionalities, whereas Bhabha is talking about an experience of displaced positionality. In another passage, he also associates the present as site of inbetweenness with Benjamin's angel of history (ANNS 212). Bhabha effectively identifies Benjamin's angel with his own concept of time-lag. This is a figure more closely associated with decisive rupture (see Robinson, 2013).

In DissemiNation, Bhabha argues that migration is a special case of culture-formation. The experience of uprooting creates a void. The idea of the nation fills this void through metaphor (LC, 139). Migrant articulations of identity are too hybrid for hierarchical or binary classification (LC, 140). Migrants and other colonised groups and minorities are the marks of shifting discursive boundaries. They subvert the frontiers and reality-effect of nationalist discourse, breaking down its monologue (LC, 164). They function as a return of the repressed, alienating the fixity of the dominant frame (LC, 168). National identity (like all identity) is always contradictory and ambivalent (see above, 82), but the migrant experience is an especially sharp instance of this condition. It blows open the ambivalence inherent in national identity. And this is progressive, because national identity is founded in exclusion. For instance, the English homeland of quiet fields and cathedral towns is premised on the otherness of places which supposedly need to be civilised. It is therefore a good thing that 'imaginative geographies' are 'changing' and migrants are coming 'to change the history of the nation' (LC, 169-70).

Elsewhere, Bhabha adds that nations are actually founded through a supplementary colonial periphery. Narratives of national pasts are invented so people can turn away from a present of disjuncture. In the process, 'the present of *nationness* turns ambivalent and anxious' (ANNS, 205). 'What', he asks rhetorically, 'if the nature of historical experience produces tiles that have incommensurable, jagged dimensions?... What if the "big picture" of national culture has always dominated and silenced the anxious, split truths and double destinies of those who are minoritized and marginalized by the iniquities of modern society?' (ANNS, 216). By implication, the loss of the illusion of national unity or consensus would then be a good thing. Bhabha also suggests that migration and minoritisation are effects of the nation's construction, not only effects of globalisation. 'Geopolitical mobility is as much an incipient aspect of the restlessness internal to the nation-form as [of] globalization' (ODD, 2). The nation has always been an 'unsettled, anxious *habitus*' for a series of marginalised groups such as migrants, poor people, and

unemployed people (ODD, 2). These groups are the supplement which the nation both needs and denies. They give the lie to the illusion of an inclusive, comfortable national "homeland". According to Bhabha, neoliberalism has not produced precarity. It has simply rendered existing precarity more visible.

Migrants play an important role in Bhabha's theory. However, migrants are not the only hybrids. Because 'some people are moving', even those who have never moved 'have also moved in some ways' (MGM, 176). This conclusion arises because, for Bhabha, minoritisation (the emergence of minorities) is primarily temporal (related to time), rather than spatial (MGM, 176). In Bhabha's account, the 'uncanny' experience of being out-of-place renders sedentary subaltern subjects (i.e. those who stay in one place) similar to migrants (Huddart, 2006:57). For example, an African-American who has never left Baltimore might experience inbetweenness as a result of their sense of being out-of-place in a white-dominated society. An Amazonian person might experience inbetweenness because of dispossession and externally-imposed transformation of their life-world. They might live in a mixed condition somewhere between traditional Amazonian culture, national non-indigenous Brazilian or Peruvian culture, and globalised western media images. Colonised people also occupy several locations at once, even when they are not

migrants or of mixed origins. They express both the colonised identity and an imitation or mimicry of the coloniser. Rather than active cultural mixing, a passive experience of dislocation seems to be central for Bhabha. Ambiguity also occurs among different kinds of identities. Talking about different positionalities - race, class, gender, sexuality and so on - Bhabha argues that 'we cannot think those things exclusively in themselves' (SPD, 379). They are constructed intersectionally, through their relationships to one another. For example, a combination of feminism and anti-racism does not combine two prior ideas or signs. It necessarily creates something new. Furthermore, each local setting is different from others. Every intervention needs to be local and strategic.

A minority positionality is valuable because it provides the most potent localised experience of the emancipatory effects of neoliberalism. The 'partial and incipient conditions of global life' - the zone of fluidity and ambiguity between different binary states - is experienced most sharply by minorities than by other groups (SBS, 348). The position of minorities according to Bhabha is roughly equivalent to those of migrants and colonised peoples. Minority exclusion exists wherever freedom or equality is denied. It is denied so as to normalise or neutralise difference. Bhabha proposes that one should conceive of minorities as processes of affiliation (not as identities). Minorities should not seek sovereignty (SBS, 348). Exiles often feel a need for a 'triumphant ideology' in which they are reconstituted as a people. This goes against Bhabha's theoretical model. Like Saïd, Bhabha instead seeks 'a state of exile free from this triumphant ideology', which accepts the fragmentation of history and selfhood (Saïd, 2003:177). This seems to involve a strange short-circuit between a claim that minorities/migrants *do* adopt subversive ideologies and a claim that they *should*. Migrants and minorities are subversive – but only if they do what Bhabha proposes.

For Bhabha, minorities have positive value as sites of difference. A minority should not be seen as an 'identity', and especially not as the formation of autonomy. It should be seen as a process of affiliation. It is a special kind of affiliation which avoids sovereignty and sees itself as partial (Byrne, 2009:135). In his 'Manifesto' for the reinvention of Britain, Bhabha argues that the word 'minoritise' might be used as a verb. It might mean an act of affiliating with the excluded or with emergent social movements. Such a minority would be not only a principle but 'a passion, a structure of feeling' (RB, 39). While this sounds similar to Deleuze and Guattari's theory of minoritarianism, it does not have the implication of a line of flight. Rather, the structure of feeling of minorities is mainly negative. Migrants and other minorities are valued because they experience discomfort, disjunction, unsafety, anxiety, panic, and so on – and thus have an affective connection to constitutive ambiguity.

In an article on the ebonics controversy (an argument about whether ebonics, or African-American Vernacular English, should be treated as a distinct language), Bhabha argues that colonial histories often meet in vernacular language (QE, 26). He claims that speech should be seen as a 'living tongue'. Studying it as an object, as in linguistics, does violence to it. He argues for types of speech which are institutionalised and yet resist formalisation as languages (QE, 26). Such speech can express particularity and guard privacy (QE, 26). On the other hand, he denounces ideas of linguistic propriety as 'arrogant and restricted' (QE, 107). Bhabha sees African-American English as speech of the type he advocates. He

argues that it is both very expressively effective, and ineffective in systemic contexts (such as job-hunting). It is sometimes also captured and transformed by the culture industry. Bhabha notes that both Bombay Bazaar English and African-American English contain continuous present uses of the verb 'to be' (*she be reading*, *she is always saying yes*). He suggests that this construction involves a sense of the ongoing nature of people and situations which is not present in standard English (QE, 26). Elsewhere, he also argues that refugees are producing a kind of 'vernacular cosmopolitanism' (SPD, 384). And in another passage, he suggests that his main interest is in what happens to the remainder left over by a *partial* identification of the minority with the nation (MGM, 175).

Nationality

Bhabha's discussions of national identity reflect his wider belief that all identities are haunted by inbetweenness and ambiguity. All national identities have a similar 'doubleness'. They combine cultural formations with social processes, without an underlying causal force to unite the two (LC, 141). The representation (and resultant creation) of the nation is a temporal process (LC, 142). It happens historically, in time. It combines the temporal aspects of 'timeless' irrationality or archaism, and teleological progress – or historical movement through homogeneous empty time (LC, 142, 158). The idea of the nation is moulded somewhere between these two temporal aspects. Like any identity, therefore, national identity is unable to ground or fix itself in place. There is no unified national will, no sense of "the people", at the root of national identity. The people as an articulated position emerge from an abyssal space of enunciation (LC, 154). In his reading of the nationalist and racist author Renan, Bhabha suggests that the nation is not simply founded on will. The exercise of will also entails a deliberate forgetfulness of moments of national disunity (LC, 160-1). Nationality is also haunted by its others. According to Bhabha, any focus on national authenticity leads to an authoritarian or paternalist position towards minorities and migrants (HH, 125).

Nationality is the peculiarly western way of experiencing locality (LC, 140). It is a set of 'complex strategies of cultural identification and discursive address' (LC, 140). The nation can never be realised in the fullness of time. It is always torn between archaic past and linear present. Its authority, as a representation, arises within a field of social contestation (LC, 144). As an identity, nationalism is both fixated on and insecure about social boundaries (LC, 144). The national 'people' are both the object of nationalist education and the subject of signification (LC, 145). They are neither the beginning nor the end of nationalism. Rather, they are the inbetween zone between the unified nation and the specific conflicting interests and identities of real groups (LC, 146).

The idea of the nation is a constant displacement of the anxiety of modern pluralism (LC, 149). In other words, it covers up the diversity of social groups to create an illusory certainty. It generally does this through the illusion of a unified tradition. This involves displacing the present into the past, and space into time (LC, 149). For example, present nationalist imaginings of a unified nature are projected backwards into historical revolts such as the Indian "Mutiny"/Revolt, or the Boudicca revolt in Roman England. Looking at the historical record, the "nation" can never be found either in the past or the present. Bhabha compares it to Claude Lefort's idea of a rule which is split from its own effective operation, which seeks to show itself as an 'exhorbitant power' owing nothing to the movement which makes it appear (LC, 146). The same movement of signification both creates its exhorbitant power and deprives it of certainty (LC, 147).

Nationality is thus ambiguous both for general reasons (the self-other split) and reasons specific to it (the past-present ambiguity, the imagining of a nation which doesn't

observably exist). This ambiguity provides a basis for resistance to nationalism. The ideological construction of the nation can be disrupted using counter-narratives which evoke or erase its totalising boundaries (LC, 149). Certain aspects of the nation – particularly migrants and minorities – are its 'supplement'. This 'supplement' enters dominant discourse in a way which subverts its ability to generalise. This disrupts its ability to produce the appearance and effect of national or popular unity (LC, 155). The idea of a supplement is derived from Derrida. Supplements are co-constitutive terms which appear to simply be added to, or to threaten, primary terms, but which in fact are their necessary condition.

In the Margins: Derrida and Supplementarity

The philosophical concept of a '***supplement***', or 'supplementarity', was invented by Jacques Derrida in *Of Grammatology* (1976/1967), though he partly derived it from Rousseau. It is adopted more-or-less directly from Derrida by Bhabha. A supplement is a supposedly secondary element added to a supposedly primary (original, natural) term or thing so as to keep it operating. It is a substitute which allows the supposedly primary thing to persist in different contexts. It appears to be secondary and additional – simply an application or imperfection of the primary term. In fact, it is necessary for the primary term to exist and operate.

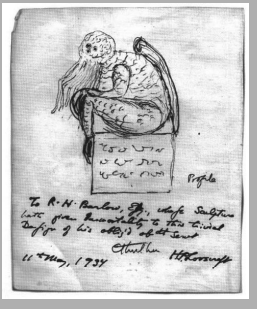
For example, general theories of economics or democracy or class struggle might be supplemented by variations to deal with national conditions. Maoist thought put a lot of energy into the 'Sinification of Marxism', which effectively replaced class with imperialism and national renewal as the central issues (Dirlik, 1994b).

Commodity markets in former colonial countries often rely on a 'supplement' of a local moral economy and a subsistence sector which underpins low wages (see Spivak, 1985; Wolpe, 1972). This kind of uneven and combined development seems to be an imperfect form of capitalism tainted by feudal/traditional residues. In fact it is functional for modern capitalism. Liberal democracy might also be altered or 'supplemented' to handle ethnic conflict, for example in Lebanon (Hazbun, 2016). These would all be examples of supplementation. An apparent original form (Marxism, capitalism, democracy) is altered so that it works in a local context, by adding a supplement to it.

Supplements might seem to correct a fault in the original, or to add something more to it. For Derrida, it is 'undecidable' whether supplements enrich the primary thing or replace and corrupt it. For example, immigrants and minorities are seen both as adding "diversity" to national cultures, and as a threat which alienates the nation from itself. The supplement also allows people to say contrary things without logical contradiction. For example, it allows Mao, Gramsci, or Althusser to maintain the primacy of class without actually reducing their political context to class. They can maintain that class is essential in the last instance, but also that particular contexts are contingent, because they 'supplement' Marxist theory in various ways. Derrida makes use of the fact that the word *supplément* in French can arise from either of the verbs for addition or substitution (supplanting). A supplement may either add to and complement something, or replace and threaten it. According to Derrida, all language-use involves the logic of supplementation. The supplement, as a formal element, is built into the binary structure of language. A word always needs to be interpreted, or 'supplemented', to apply to a particular context.

According to Derrida, primary terms are always insufficient. They are affected by the ambiguous, lacking nature of language. Supplements are added to language so as to deal with the insufficiency of primary terms. On the surface, a supplement looks as if it is a secondary, 'impure' addition to the 'pure' primary term. In reality, according to Derrida and Bhabha, the supplement is what makes the primary term possible to begin with. It is an example of the extimate other (see above, 326-30) which returns to haunt the self. It is an excluded or marginal aspect of a text which is in fact also intimate and included. It appears to be a barrier to the self-presence of the primary element, when in fact it is what makes the primary element possible. Primary terms are always insufficient in themselves. They are never simply 'present'. They need the supplement to function. The supplement both makes the primary term seem more solid, and points to the lack on which it is founded. In fact, the primary term and the supplement are co-constituted. They are enmeshed in an extimate way. One cannot exist without the other. They should be thought about together, not as separate objects.

The presence of the primary term sometimes becomes entangled with anxiety or even paranoia about the supplement. There is anxiety or paranoia about controlling it or filling it in. For example, western states become anxious about the "underdeveloped" situation of non-western countries, and wish to "develop" them. But this desire is ambivalent, because successful "development" would destroy the binary, and the identity of the west. In one of Derrida's examples, something can't be an 'original' unless its reproduction or translation is possible. But the reproduction of something destroys its unique status as the authentic thing. The supplement is constantly disruptive,whether it wants to be or not. This is because it both underpins the necessity of the primary term and undermines this



necessity. To return to the case of capitalism, an argument about supplementation might suggest that western capitalism, the supposedly 'pure' form, actually always relied on 'impure' forms elsewhere. Or it might argue that capitalism is subtly different in every national context – not just the global South. Or it might stress the contingency of the process by which objects are turned into equivalent commodities and activities into equivalent forms of abstract labour (see De Angelis, 1996). Pure capitalism is nothing more than an abstract concept. Concrete capitalism can't exist without a supplement.

According to Derrida, the meaning or 'presence' of the primary term is constantly deferred. It can only pretend, in an authoritarian way, to have arrived at 'self-presence' or 'immediacy'. By recognising and performing this endless deferral or 'play' (which is also the endless production of difference), people can resist the authoritarian attempt to fix meaning in place. For example, scientists and anthropologists have sometimes thought they can eventually make a theory which covers their entire field of study. If they can't, it's because of contingent limits such as human mental capacity. Derrida believes that such a total theory is impossible, not for contingent reasons, but because of constitutive lack. A general theory would always need supplementation to apply to a particular case. Writing is a case of supplementation, and possibly is the same thing as supplementation. The process of writing, or textuality, is prior to all specific ways of seeing according to Derrida. Writing in this sense is a continual, endless, open-ended process – a bit like the mindless flutes of Azathoth which create the primal chaos of the universe in Lovecraft's mythos.

For Derrida and Bhabha, relations which appear to be binary oppositions are often really relations of supplementarity. This is why the elimination of the other term in any binary is undesirable. It is not possible to have the primary term without the supplement. Getting rid of the apparent fetter or limit actually gets rid of the primary term too. The illusion that one can get rid of the supplement (or in Lacanian accounts, the 'Thing') is itself the root of most of the world's problems according to some Derrideans and Lacanians. For example, social hierarchy is an effect of the hierarchical relationship between primary terms and supplements. All binary thinking is inherently authoritarian. In particular, any binary which creates the impression that one term is 'self-present', natural or obvious is authoritarian. It has to relegate the other term to a secondary status. This is partly why authors like Bhabha have such an allergy to antagonistic kinds of politics. Colonialism, nationalism, racism, and fundamentalism are seem through the lens of a primary term and a disavowed supplement. But so are theories and movements such as anti-colonial liberation movements, the theories of Fanon and Saïd, Marxist theory and practice, some types of identity politics, anarchism, Deleuzian thought, and so on. The gesture of political splitting is so common, that deconstructive theory had to effectively forbid the overwhelming majority of political movements and positions to hold to its critique.

Ethically, the existence of the supplement is significant. It means that language, especially purist and essentialist language, is 'violent'. It endows some things with self-presence by making others absent or secondary. The supplement is devalued and enslaved so the primary term can seem authoritative, masterful, powerful, and pure. It appears to be an inessential extra added to the primary thing. In its more benevolent forms, it appears simply to be a local addition or adaptation. In its more threatening forms, it seems to be an evil or lack which is added to the innocent abundance and self-presence of the primary term. For example, it might seem to be an

invader or a contaminant. But if the thing is already complete and self-present, it shouldn't be possible to supplement it. For Derrida, the possibility of the supplement shows that the thing is actually founded on a constitutive lack. The supplement isn't really added at all. It's formed at the same moment as the primary term, as its extimate other.

The word '***privilege***' is used in this context to refer to the attempts to elevate the primary term to a position of masterful purity. This usage has influenced the widespread use of the word in today's identity politics (although there are also other influences, particularly the Critical Race Theory of authors like Ignatiev). In a Derridean use of the word "privilege", it does not just mean that (say) white people are economically better-off or less often abused by police than black people. "Whiteness", or the identity of being white, is discursively constructed using the degraded category of "blackness" as a supplement. From a deconstructive point of view, the privileged group is always conceptually constructed through, and benefits from, the subordination, abuse, and abject status of the supplement (the oppressed group). It needs this group's enslavement or degradation to affirm its own identity. This is what it means to be 'privileged'.

But doesn't this mean that people *always* need an abject Other? If there's a way out of this problem for deconstructionists, it's to embrace the ambivalence of identity and the ecstatic enjoyment of the process of textual production itself. Derrida advocates, and Bhabha appears to believe in, an endless process of textual deferral, substitution, and supplementation of meaning. Texts are to be constantly rewritten and reread in new ways to keep them moving. In this way, Derrida hopes that the creation of primary terms and supplements can be avoided or at least disrupted. Being aware of the process of supplementation helps to prevent or reduce its violence. The

worst kinds of hierarchy involve the naturalisation of the primary term and "blindness" to the co-constitution of primary term and supplement. This is why 'essentialism', or believing that anything exists in itself or is immanently self-motivated (labour in Marx, desire in Deleuze, individuals in liberalism, traditions in communitarianism...) is such a huge theoretical sin according to authors like Bhabha. It is also one of the reasons why 'modern reason' is such a convenient enemy, and why poesis, or cultural production, is valued as an alternative.

There is some evidence for this theory of oppression. Certain kinds of political movements – particularly ethnoreligious and far-right movements – do seem to operate with a logic of 'supplementarity'. They need to fight, enslave, or abuse the 'other', the out-group, to ground their own sense of purity and power. And they blame all the world's problems on the out-group so as to portray the in-group as blameless and pure. This is shown in detail in Theweleit's (1987/1980) work on fascism. Lacanian theorist Renata Salecl suggests that such movements need to put the 'other' in its 'place' (through violence or abuse) in order for the in-group to feel secure in its own 'place' (1998:120-1). The definition of the in-group is so dependent on the moments of conflict with or oppression of the out-group that it would collapse if ever the out-group disappeared or was destroyed.

The Nazis never had to deal with the question of how to sustain their identity once Jews and communists had been wiped out. But Mao and Stalin had to deal with the absence of a powerful local bourgeoisie after their successful revolutions. They dealt with this situation by spinning off conspiracy theories in which bourgeois or foreign agents were invisibly sabotaging the society, intermediate or politically difficult groups were somehow affiliated to the bourgeoisie, or bourgeois ideas continued to

persist among non-bourgeois sections of the population. Sometimes, there were real foreign spies or opposition movements at work. But this type of explanation was applied so wide-rangingly to the system's internal problems, it's hard not to see something like the logic of the supplement at work.

There are also family resemblances between supplementation and the various theories about systematic exploitation which is disguised as inferiority. For example, Marx argued that capital depends on labour and takes value from it, and dependency theory argues that the 'developed' countries enrich themselves by actively 'underdeveloping' other countries, turning them into subordinate sources of primary goods or cheap labour. But it appears, to someone who looks at workers as simply atomised sellers of labour-power or countries as separate units with independent economies, that the effect of exploitation is an inherent, local deficit. This is why Derridean cultural theory can be combined fairly easily with social justice issues.

Bhabha does not necessarily oppose national identity. As we have seen, he generally avoids rejecting dominant categories. But he wishes to keep national identity open (Huddart, 2006:68). The role of supplementary elements is to prevent fixity of meaning. The resultant 'circulation' of signifiers is taken to render claims to cultural mastery impossible. It displaces the nation's own inbetweenness from its borders to its inside (LC, 150). It is no longer a problem with foreigners or 'others'. It is a problem with an internal split in the nation itself (LC, 150). This situation challenges people to rethink history, without transcendental signifiers or ideas of national unity (LC, 153). This is not a process of resolving contradictions. Rather, it reconsiders the 'times, terms and traditions' which define history (LC, 155), rendering them ambiguous and plural. Marginal positions 'cannot be a knowledge that is stabilized in the enunciation' (LC, 152). Marginality is inherently

unstable. It therefore disrupts 'representationalist' history. The site of antagonism, the point of cultural difference, cannot be 'sublated' (the Hegelian term for harmonious reconciliation or transcendence). It can only be 'negotiated' (LC, 162). Such rewritten histories can be constructed and narrated. But they do not lead to a unitary, 'historicist' history with a single meaning (LC, 157). The borders and peripheries of nations open onto difference. They are sites of 'minoritised' nations and peoples who are not part of the nation's homogeneous empty time (AMD, 124). These marginal groups should speak from a position of 'contentious *internal* liminality' – not from outside the nation, but from the site of its internal ambivalence (LC, 149).

Bhabha calls on his readers to keep open the 'supplementary' space for the articulation of knowledges and experiences which are not part of the dominant frame (LC, 163). This space is necessary to keep knowledge incomplete – to stop its being homogenised by the dominant frame of interpretation (LC, 163). Furthermore, the very ambivalence of the national narrative allows it to become a space for contestation by marginalised groups (LC, 167). It creates 'cracks and absences' which speak with 'another voice' from that of the dominant narrative (LC, 168). Dialogues with supposed fellow-citizens are haunted by a 'behemoth' (UMLA, 16) or a 'ghost' (UMLA, 17). Its power is to 'spook them to hell' – to haunt the in-group and disturb its fantasies of social wholeness and secure authority (UMLA, 17). Minority claims redraw the frontiers of the nation in ways which undermine the claim to national unity and 'presence'. Instead, its frontiers become 'menacing' and 'agonistic' (conflictual or negotiated). The nation is 'always less than one' – never present to itself – and at the same time, 'double' (LC, 168). The national system is subverted by something which cannot be incorporated in it, but which it requires. It remains irreducibly "extimate". This failure to harmonise or reconcile different experiences is something to be positively celebrated according to Bhabha.

The existence of ambiguity does not in itself guarantee newness or transformation. Some responses to ambiguity seek to suppress it. They partially prevent its unfolding in transformative social processes. However, they also persist in showing its existence. Bhabha's analyses of racism, imperialist ideology, and nationalism see them in these terms. Racism involves 'signs of purity and persecution' which are themselves expressions of the ambivalence of identity (LC, 166). In other words, Bhabha believes that racists feel persecuted because the national or racial purity they seek is actually dependent on the supplement. They experience the gap between the timeless image of the nation and its historically shifting reality as persecution by minorities or foreigners. In fact, there can be no such division between pure and impure. If all nations are split and in process, then everyone is foreign to some degree. Nobody can exclude others as foreign (Huddart, 2006:58-9). Racial marking emerges from the fact that there are always unassimilable aspects in a nation (UMLA, 12). Dominant national discourses are constantly haunted by their others. They are anxious and unstable, focused on the figure of the other. Examples could be multiplied: Islamophobia in America and Britain; the nodal status of Kashmir, Chechnya, Taiwan, Tibet, Kosovo; Jews in inter-war Europe; indigenous and black people in nations identifying as mixed-race; the position of the Kurds in Turkey, and so on.

Nationalism leads to distortions in one's sense of history. Bhabha states that all who enter modernity through the gateway of nationalism are doomed to look backwards (UMLA, 12). This is because the nation is constitutively split. The nation claims various modern ideological virtues, such as social equality and democracy. However, these claims are undermined by the fact that the nation, and group belonging within it (i.e. nationality), are unchosen (UMLA, 13). Bhabha also argues that national identities formed by diasporas undermine the type of national identity theorised in Benedict Anderson's idea of imagined communities (LC, 6). According to Anderson, national identity is imaginary, because most members of a nation do not know one another. People imagine themselves as part of a community because of similar reference-points such as language, a common press and literature, familiar institutions, maps and symbols. The community is actually a social construct, even an imaginary one, but it seems to be natural and real. People feel themselves to be part of a community and even die for it. For Bhabha, this type of nationalism is not available to minorities. Diasporas imagine their communities in different ways, which disrupt the dominant system of national identity. Communities constructed 'otherwise than modernity' also exist in border positions, whether they resist assimilation or consciously embrace hybridity (LC, 6).

While Bhabha's approach resists strong forms of nationalism, it seems to preclude the overcoming of the nation-state or the national imaginary as such. It relies on subverting the fixity of national identity so as to create more inclusive, less secure nationalisms. This seems, at best, a reformist project. An alternative to nation-states might entail some kind of inclusive counter-community, like Agamben's community of whatever-singularities. For example, the transnational anarchist community has arisen outside of national imaginaries. It functions like a nationless diaspora (Schwarz, 2010). A text such as *Bolo'Bolo* suggests a rhizomatic, horizontal type of relationship as an alternative to national identity. International socialism and various kinds of global humanism are also alternatives to nationalism. So are different scales of identity such as bioregionalism and localism. A

participant in an intentional community might feel themselves to be a citizen of this community, rather than the nation (Firth, 2012). However, it is unclear if any escape from nationalism is even conceivable in Bhabha's framework. Any alternative identity would itself be haunted by incompleteness, and fear of a new authoritarianism might outweigh its benefits for Bhabha.

Translation and Appropriation

A 2017 roundtable brings together Bhabha with several identity-political scholars interested in appropriation. The idea of appropriation has a long history in relation to biopiracy and commercialisation. However, it is has recently taken on a wider sense in which members of historically marginalised groups claim exclusive use rights on particular aspects of culture derived from their group. It is taken to be a racist, appropriative act to use another group's symbols, because it steals the voice and identity of the target group. Hence for instance, one finds campaigns against white people wearing dreadlocks, hoop earrings, bhindis, mohicans, or Native American headdresses, or practising yoga or shamanism. This is seen in contemporary identity politics as a kind of 'erasure' arising from a 'power structure' (Salome Asega, in RCA, 3). It runs up against the valuing of

cultural fluidity and cross-cultural transfer in Bhabha's work, and in much of the cultural studies of the 1970s-80s (e.g. Hebdige, 1979; Hall and Jefferson, 1975). The boundary between appropriation and legitimate cross-cultural practices is blurry, and few object to (for example) the spread of Indian or Chinese cuisine. Others debate whether a particular cultural artefact, such as a Mohican hairdo, is really appropriated when it is re-used. Bhabha has always celebrated cultural flows and exchanges, so this theory poses a problem for him.

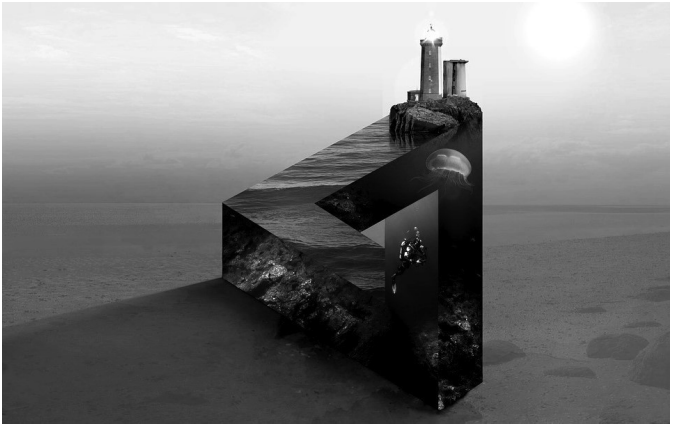
Bhabha begins his intervention by emphasising that he prefers the concept of 'translation' to 'appropriation'. He believes that culture always involves translation and interpretation. One cannot protect a pure culture from contact with other cultures. The idea of appropriation attaches a default negative value to the act of copying or hybridising. It assumes that there is a pure original which needs to be valued and protected. In contrast, translation carries a neutral value. The original does not necessarily have an overriding value (RCA, 1). All language undergoes translation, because translation is an effect of the deferred nature of language (see above, 92-3, 112). There are always interpretive changes in any earlier work. Elements of the original reappear in different times and places with different meanings and uses (RCA, 14). This is an effect of what Bhabha calls the time-lag. In this process, there is not continuity between original and belated copy. There is retrospective convergence. The relationship between the original and the copy can be tangential, yet still legitimate (RCA, 15). Practices of cultural exchange are often 'strategies of resistance', for instance through mimicry (RCA, 6). For example, in Bhabha's work on 'Sly Civility' (see below, 461-2, 495-7), it is the English colonisers complaining that the Indians are appropriating their language and turning it into something they no longer understand (RCA, 6). Further, Bhabha notes that global cultural flows create many situations where people adopt practices from other cultures. People in Botswana watch Indian music videos and copy the dances. Children in a globalised mediaspace watch dances from all over the world and copy them in their rooms.

Cultural newness arises from copying and hybridising. It is undesirable and impossible to stop this process. The point, therefore, is to find a way of drawing the line between good and bad types of copying. Bhabha thus seeks to narrow and specify what counts as appropriation. He suggests that 'nobody makes the claim of appropriation until somebody feels that something inappropriate is happening' (RCA, 2). Appropriation is implicitly distinct from citation or quotation, which are valued. The accusation of appropriation happens when culture is linked to property-claims, to ownership of identity or history (RCA, 4). Yet, for Bhabha, the oppressed do not own their own history. Their history is constructed through a duality with the oppressor (RCA, 4). Hence, Bhabha wants to question the notion of ownership (RCA, 7). By avoiding default assumptions that pure originals are good and copies are bad, one can start asking different questions. The important question, for Bhabha, is whether (and why) a particular act of copying is taken to be unjust, inaccurate, insulting, provocative, and so on (RCA, 2). None of these aspects can be read-off from the act of copying itself.

Anyone, progressive or reactionary, can make the 'don't appropriate my symbols' move. Nonetheless, such moves are not all the same. The important thing for Bhabha is *why* someone is appropriating something. The notion of making an ethical choice (see below, 683-694) is vital here. However, Bhabha is then pressed to back down from this claim. 'We can never quite control these acts and their signification. They exceed intention' (RCA, 8). One is then left with a sense of responsibility towards unknowable interpretations and effects. The bad kinds of appropriation are those which either make an irresponsible choice or forego their duty to make a choice by being unreflexive (RCA, 7). One must thus refuse to oppose appropriation/cultural transfer as such. Rather, one should try to distinguish between 'facile, self-aggrandizing, narcissistic' appropriation and 'questing and questioning translation' (RCA, 15). Later he posits the same issue slightly differently. 'You can appropriate what you want', it is impossible to stop plagiarising and copyright infringement, 'but it's only [if] you get caught that the issue [a]rises. And so the process [of copying] itself, however, technologically enhanced and generationally accepted it is, needs

to have certain conditions of acceptance or criteria of judgement. These criteria cannot simply be based on the taboo of appropriation, or the policing of what can or cannot be appropriated, because these forms of appropriation and translation will continue to be produced... The question is: What are the conditions of reception? What are the "interpretational good practices"...?' Bhabha proposes that such criteria should focus on providing 'convergence' not 'consensus', acknowledging difference, and using 'interpretational, political' criteria of judgement (RCA, 18-19). One must ask what story is told by putting the images together, and whether it is saying anything new or useful.

Bhabha thus makes several distinct claims. Firstly, we are not to condemn nor endorse translation/appropriation as such. Secondly, appropriation is not to be policed at the level of source products. Thirdly, however, there is to be some kind of moral or legal regime to control which kinds of cultural mixture are allowed. Good translation/hybridity is to be distinguished from bad appropriation by criteria of political convenience: whether the resultant text serves an emancipatory function. This allows Bhabha to embrace *some* anti-appropriation claims even if he rejects their ontological basis. Where a privileged person irresponsibly copies something in a way which has undesirable political effects, 'appropriation' in the bad sense occurs. Claims against appropriation are wrong in their basic form, because they appeal back to an original. However, they are a form taken by legitimate Levinasian justice-claims regarding irresponsible or destructive uses. This does little to decide the particular controversies, since the political consequences (harmful, helpful, neutral, or trivial) are themselves likely to be contested. The discussion is nonetheless revealing in showing the differences between Bhabha's approach and more overtly militant forms of identity politics.



The Third Space and Time-Lag

The concept of 'Third Space' in Bhabha's work is related to linguistic theory. For Bhabha, language always involves a 'Third Space'. This is a space where the 'subject of a proposition' (usually termed 'subject of the statement') meets the 'subject of enunciation'. This means, roughly speaking, where the categories of language, and the speaker as agent, meet the social positions and meanings of the speaker, which on Bhabha's model, are also effects of language but in a different way (LC, 36). This is a distinction drawn from Lacanian theory, in which the two subjects stand for the conscious/ego and the unconscious (see above, 87-9). In every statement there is both the purported subject who speaks and an unconscious subject which is not equivalent to the speaking "I". This is why every act of speech is split and ambivalent, according to this theory.

In structuralist and poststructuralist accounts, it is common to maintain that the unconscious subject can actually be read-off from the structure of the language. This means that externally inferred or imputed meanings, or social effects, can be interpreted as unconscious motives. Given the complexity of psychoanalysis, this is, to say the least,

problematic. It provides the basis for symptomatic reading (see above, 94). This is a practice of reading others' statements as expressions of their position, with a focus on what is not said or on gaps and contradictions. In my view, it is generally a pretext for projecting a theorist's beliefs onto others. In Bhabha's theory, it leads to the conclusion that the space in which culture is produced is always ambivalent (LC, 37). The third space draws attention to the incompleteness of the sites it constructs and separates (Byrne, 2009:14). The border zone is not only the space of migrants and hybrids; it is the zone everyone occupies when they use language.

The 'third space' is thus effectively another term for ambiguity or inbetweenness. Bhabha argues that the 'third space' emerges in all cases of articulation, translation and repetition. For instance, it occurs in debates on global citizenship and cultural rights, and in the constant shifting between older and newer social forms (DDR, 32-3). The term is presumably also meant to connote 'Third World', the postcolonial world as third space, and terms such as 'Third Text' and 'Third Cinema'. A third space appears, for example, when ideas of the radically other – enemy, criminal, native, etc – break down. When these categories collapse, a glimpse of the other in Levinasian terms (as a valued other in an existential sense) becomes possible (Byrne, 2009:147-8). The space constructed here is on the one hand dialogical. On the other hand, it seems to require prior acceptance of a postcolonial view of one's positionality (see above, 139-50). It is thus a dialogue between positions, rather than people prior to positions (Byrne, 2009:149). The cultural 'thread' which constitutes this third space is enigmatic and culturally 'thick', or difficult to penetrate (2009:149). In its social effects, a third space forces colonisers to confront the ambiguity and lack of meaning at the heart of their discourse. Used politically, a third space has been defined as 'a space where the weak resist the dominant by adopting elements from dominant, hegemonic discourses and thus challenging dominant forces with their own devices' (Lemay-Hebert and Freedman, 2017:38).

'Time-lag' is the equivalent in time to the 'third space' in space. It is a zone in which linear time and the past/present binary break down. Bhabha encourages a process in which the past intrudes into the present. This does not only make the present incomplete. It also shows what the transition between times or places involves (Byrne, 2009:151). In other words, it confirms the Derridean or Lacanian view of the underpinnings of presence. It is part of a transition Bhabha seeks in conceptions of time. He believes there is a struggle between two views of time. The first is a fixed view of time and history – for example, traditionalism, teleology, and mythical time. Most everyday experiences of time are of this type. The second is a 'shifting, strategically displaced' view of time as a historical and political process of negotiation and articulation (LC, 35). The latter is the desirable view of time. It is also a zone of 'occult instability' and of the future, the 'to-come' (LC, 35). For more on the time-lag, see Chapter 7 on colonialism. Historically, homogeneous empty time (the first type) is associated with capitalism and modernity. Its effects are criticised by radical theorists of time such as Walter Benjamin and Antonio Negri. However, Bhabha's Derridean view of time is only one of several alternatives (see also Firth and Robinson, 2017; Eliade, 1954; Telban, 1998; Muecke, 2004). Also, time-lag is in some ways rather similar to the disjunctive eternal present of neoliberalism (see Rushkoff, 2004; IPC, 2014). The terms 'time-lag' and 'Third Space' both refer to a moment of conditionality which is always present inbetween two things, in their repetition or deferral. This conditionality opens up alongside – and is an alternative to – dialectical transcendence (TT, 110). It is the form of Bhabha's concept of inbetweenness when it's applied to time and space respectively.

CHAPTER 6

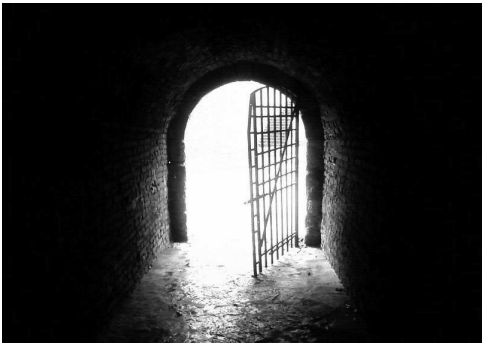
Bhabha and Hybridity – A Critique

Critique Part 1: Is Hybridity Transformative?

One of the problems with Bhabha's approach is that it leads to the perverse conclusion that opposition to oppressive systems should be avoided. Bhabha assumes that oppositional stances reproduce the system by reproducing its binaries. If this is the case, however, revolutionary changes are impossible to conceive. Yet revolutionary changes have happened historically. Bhabha rejects the creation of an alternative, anti-colonial tradition. Instead he seeks to 'interrupt' the dominant tradition. Bhabha's strategy displaces and unsettles this tradition, rather than opposing it (Byrne, 2009:53-4). The danger in this approach is that it leaves intact, or even reinforces, the tradition it interrupts. The 'trunk' or hierarchical discourse of the dominant tradition is not uprooted or left behind. Instead, it is kept in place as the focus of attention.

This leads to a strange complicity between the critic and the criticised. The critic is situated in an almost hysterical position of simultaneously affirming and tearing down the colonial 'trunk'. This is reminiscent of Žižek's criticism of postmodern critique. He argues

that it ironises, subverts, shuffles the terms, and yet leaves the dominant script in place (2002:70-1). I disagree with Bhabha's view that the 'beyond' is the same as the 'inbetween' (see above, 302-3, 309). The 'beyond' is constructed, not between dominant categories, but through the proactive rejection of the systemic basis for these categories. In Situationist terms, the dominant binaries are the 'false choice', both of whose terms are inside capitalism. The point is to reject capitalism, and therefore the false choice.



Bhabha writes as if there are only two alternatives: a naïve, essentialist attachment to identities taken to be separate to themselves, or a critically aware belief in the constitutive nature of the inbetween zone and the constructedness of all identities. The latter position entails continuing to accept and use the same 'constructed' identities the naïve essentialist accepts, but with a certain ironic distance and strategic acumen. As in so many cases, Bhabha here uses the very binarising method he opposes to his advantage (see above, 264-8).

Of many alternatives to both positions, I can highlight two. Firstly, there is the idea of complementary opposites, found in Andean cosmology and ancient Chinese philosophy (among others). In this view, binaries are neither embraced naïvely nor inhabited ironically. They are treated as mutually necessary and brought into some kind of balance. Secondly, there is the idea of biunivocity in Deleuze and Guattari's work. This approach allows one to talk about a type of binary in which one term stands for the field of becoming (e.g. smooth space, rhizomes, active force). The other term refers to a reified distortion of this underlying force (e.g. striated space, arborescence, reactive force). The first term is

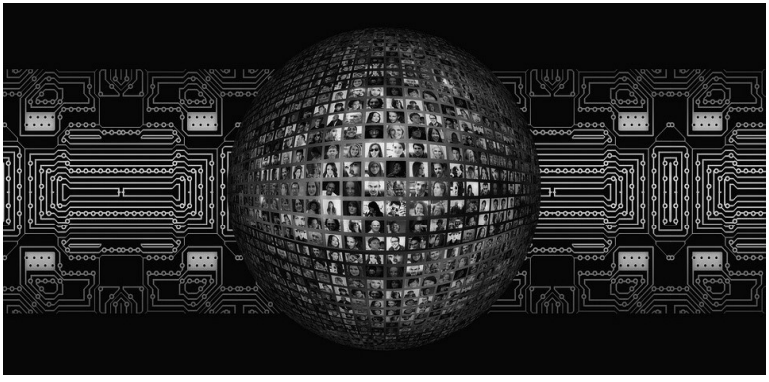
necessary to the second, but not the second to the first. This means that the second term can be overcome, since it is not mutually implicated in the first. When it is overcome, the first term becomes meaningless in a differential sense, because it is referentially applied to everything. But, something does not cease to exist because it can no longer be represented in binary language. This is because representation is a secondary - not a primary, constitutive - process in Deleuzian thought. Neither of these alternative positions can be reduced to the naïve essentialist belief in objects identical to their concepts. Nor do they have much in common with Bhabha's habitation of the borderzone between the concepts. This shows that there are more than just the two options Bhabha recognises. He unduly binarises a more complex field.

Because Bhabha keeps the colonial trunk in place, he values subaltern culture only to the extent that it interacts with, and disrupts, the dominant colonial culture. This leaves him open to accusations of devaluing (for example) Indian culture. One of Bhabha's earliest pieces was criticised by Parthasarathy, who argues that Bhabha ignores the existence of an Indian indigenous tradition of writing. Bhabha discusses Indian writing solely in relation to an English norm. He talks about how Indian authors mimic and subvert English writing. But he does not talk about the Indian tradition of writing at all. According to Parthasarathy, this is because Bhabha is uncomfortable with Indian language and culture, because he is a non-Hindu (Byrne, 2009:4). However, I don't think the problem is specific

to Indian writing. It applies equally to other contexts – the difference between Bhabha's conception of peasant resistance and those of Scott or Guha, for instance. Whenever the west comes into contact with an other, Bhabha talks about the other only as the internal self-haunting and subversion of the west. The writing-out of the non-western side of hybridity as a distinct site is a recurring feature of Bhabha's work, and postcolonial work in general.

There are also reactive and pro-systemic varieties of hybridity. A good example is what decolonial theory terms 'dewesternisation' approaches (Mignolo, 2011) – i.e. approaches which accept the norms of modernity, but reject western systemic power. Interwar Japanese nationalism, contemporary Chinese nationalism, the BJP's Hindu communalism, and other non-western nationalisms are generally examples of dewesternisation theory. Virilio recently gave a sinister spin on the concept. 'Current thinking has turned to the hybridization of political regimes. It is indeed a time of hybridization (cars, political regimes, morals). China and Russia are troubling examples in their combination of turbo-capitalism and authoritarianism' (Virilio, 2012:90). Ambivalent, hybrid regimes may be *more* authoritarian than monological regimes. There is no question that such phenomena are hybrid. A Chinese, Indian, Brazilian, Russian, Turkish, or Saudi nationalist will both celebrate local cultural particularities (sometimes in quite a fundamentalist way), and embrace aspects of modern life. Yet such phenomena seem to reinforce rather than undermine the power of global neoliberalism. By disconnecting neoliberalism from western power, such hybridities actually render it more stable and reproducible.

It is true that, like colonialism, neoliberalism undergoes mutations through its 'displacement'. Yet it does not seem to be rendered unstable by such mutations. It seems to flourish from them. Some theorists believe that the next mutation of capitalism will see its centre of gravity shift to China or some other non-western location (e.g. Arrighi and Silver, 1999). This would certainly be a postcolonial mutation. But, with China's promotion of cybernetic control systems such as social credit, low-wage production, ultranationalism, and human rights violation, it will not necessarily involve improvements in global power. Chinese activities in Africa, for example, reproduce older colonial patterns. China, like the west, sees Africa as a source of raw materials and a market for finished goods. It thus reproduces western patterns of neocolonial exploitation (see Chan-Fishel, 2007; Chan-Fishel and Lawson, 2007; Large, 2008; Ofodile, 2007). Finally, Bhabha insists that 'pure' identity is the preserve of sedentary, non-migrant, non-minority groups. It is a fantasy of modern national ingroups. Migrants have a more 'transnational', 'translational', hybrid, inbetween perspective (LC, 5). But is this true? It seems, for instance, that purist nationalism is more common among Tamil migrants than those resident in Sri Lanka (Fuglerud, 1999). Not all minorities are "misfits", and not all "misfits" are minorities.



Bhabha's theory of inbetweenness also has cybernetic overtones (see below, 659-72). In information theory, signals pass through a medium or channel in which they are necessarily haunted and diluted by "noise", or effects other than the signal. Much of cybernetics focuses on optimising the signal relative to noise. In Bhabha's theory,

dominant messages passing through subaltern people, groups, or relations are likewise disrupted by noise. This disruption – and not a counter-signal or blocking of the signal – is the source of the subversive power he theorises. Newness is possible because signals are reinflected, interrupted and distorted by noise. On the one hand, this proposal opposes the usual cybernetic project of seeking to purify the signal. On the other, it operates very much within the realm of cybernetics, as a strategy of using cybernetic power against itself.

Critique Part 2: Bhabha's Affective Politics

There is a definite psychological and affective position which Bhabha, along with Spivak and Derrida, favours. This position avoids intensity and positive emotions, avoids any emotions associated with a strong ego, and shows a strong aversion to 'splitting' emotions such as anger. It seeks to keep the self in a constant sense of awareness of its limits and of the oneness of being. It also tries to maintain the ego at a low level of empowerment without actually dissolving it. The resultant position has elements of melancholy or depression. It also has elements of passive hope, feelings of powerlessness (usually glossed as 'humility'), and a general emotional dampening which precludes effective action. This is an effective quietistic palliative. It keeps its holders in a state of acceptance of whatever exists (even if this is capitalist or colonial oppression), and able to keep functioning in a world gone to hell. It blocks the affect of anger, but this affect often finds a way through. There is a lot of passive-aggression in this affective style. For example, Bhabha's binarising gestures, his view of the world as a "strategic" field of conflict, and

his attacks on others' egos and identities all suggest a sadistic stance imbued with active aggression. However, the textual sublimation of this aggression turns it into passive-aggression.

This emotional style fits well into a world of cybernetic control, managerialism, and precarity. It adapts to such a world, rather than changing it. It is very different from the stances found in Deleuze and Guattari, Nietzsche, Situationism, and post-left anarchy, which I'd characterise as revolutionary theories of desire. These involve the breaking-down of character-armouring, the favouring of intensity and directness, a greater acceptance of anger, pursuit of joy, refusal to capitulate or renounce desire, and a favouring of affirmative and active over reactive emotions (see Robinson, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c; Bey, 1985; Vaneigem, 1979; Bonanno, 1977). These are emotional states the system tries hard to suppress, because they are truly subversive.

In the Margins: Feeling Rules and the Politics of Perversion

The status of affects/emotions in relation to thoughts and actions is debated in psychology. It is fashionable in Anglo-American psychology today to believe that affects are effects of thoughts. This is convenient for the dominant system, as it means people can be held responsible for their feelings and resultant actions and reactions. The dominant cybernetic/behaviourist model rests on evading the question of internal motivation. People are analysed simply as external nodes in a relational system. Their actions can be changed or "nudged" by feedback systems, information flows, and changes to the incentive structure or opportunity structure. People will thus be manipulated through behaviour modification, and their feelings will change in line with their behaviours and thoughts.

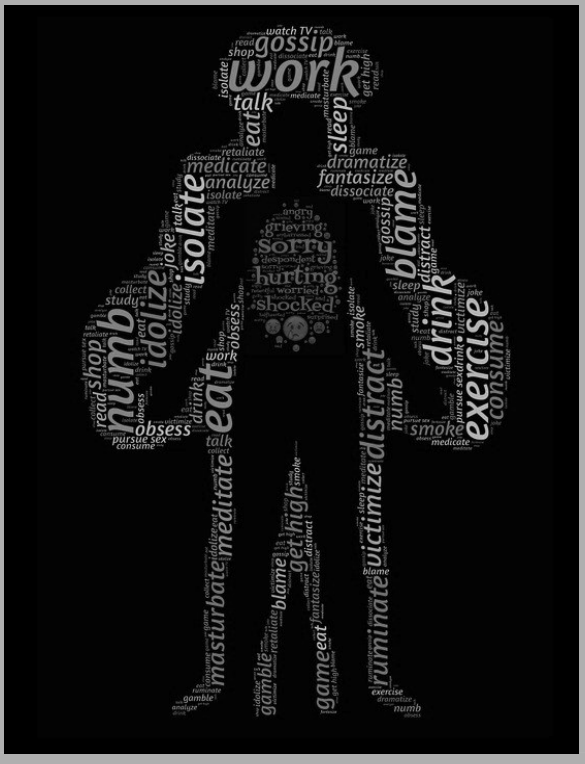
However, psychoanalysis has shown historically that people often do not have control of their feelings. Feelings arise "irrationally" from unconscious fantasies, desires, repressed memories, and other structures which are beyond conscious control. Attempts to, manipulate feelings are often counterproductive. Two confirmed examples of this are labelling theory and reactance theory. Labelling theory shows that acts are more frequent in societies where they are prohibited than in those where they are not (Lemert 1967). Reactance theory shows that, while prohibition might reduce propensity to act in a prohibited way when under surveillance, it increases the desire to act in this way. People will usually just defer gratification of the prohibited desire until they are able to act on it. This happens even if there was no prior desire to act in the prohibited way (Brehm and Brehm, 1981).

Hence, feelings can't be shaped mechanically by systems of social control. Nonetheless, systems of social control often incorporate "***feeling rules***". These are rules about what people are meant to feel in particular situations. The feminist scholar Arlie Russel Hochshild (1983) invented the concept in 1979 to refer to social norms about what people should feel. Hochshild argues that feeling rules are particularly important for performances of affective labour – where people are expected to show emotions as part of their job. For example, sales workers are meant to come across as friendly and reliable. She suggests that women are more likely to hold these kinds of jobs and feeling rules are therefore strongly gendered. Another example is that poor people are expected to show certain emotions in order to elicit pity or be seen as "deserving"

rather than "undeserving" poor. For example, poor people using charity food banks are meant to be grateful and humble rather than angry (Tarasuk and Eakin, 2003).

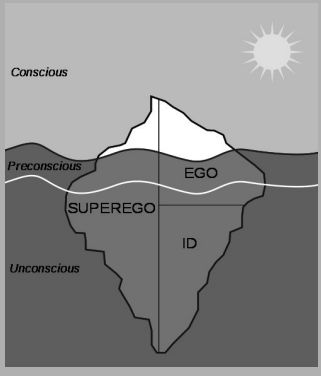
Feeling rules against anger are particularly common in systems of oppression. Oppressed groups are usually discouraged from expressing anger. Upward-directed anger is threatening to dominant hierarchies. It has an equalising effect. In her work on social movements, Helena Flam (2007) suggests that dominant elites encourage emotions in subordinates which are system-affirming – for example, trust, loyalty and gratitude. In contrast, social movements encourage socially disruptive emotions such as pride and anger. Different kinds of social movements encourage different types and degrees of disruptive emotions. For example, some movements encourage distrust of the dominant system whereas others encourage hope for reform. Positions like Bhabha's have become less common in identity activism in the 2010s. Today it is encouraged for marginalised people to express rather than contain their anger. However, the prohibition on anger also finds expression in the ideology of "safe spaces". Anger expressed by the wrong people, in the wrong places, or over the wrong issues is classified as abusive or even violent. This leads to a strange kind of doublethink in which anger is both encouraged and prohibited. It also reinforces the tendency for "oppression Olympics" (see below, 980-95), in which victory entails, among other things, the right to express anger and sometimes even sadism.

Hochschild uses socialisation theory, which assumes that emotions can be conditioned into people in the same way as other social performances. If people are forced to control their emotions as children, they will grow up with the capability do do so. She thinks this is why women are more able to do affective labour. If psychoanalysis is right, however, then these rules are unreasonable and oppressive. People will not necessarily learn self-control simply because they are taught that certain emotions are unacceptable. In fact, traumatic experiences (see above, 202-11 and below, 950-2) make it harder to control emotional reactions. Feeling rules violate the principle that "ought implies can". People don't just stop feeling something because it's socially prohibited.



Feeling rules thus lead to systems of inhibition and repression. In practice, people will at most block the expression of the feeling, rather than the feeling itself. But this has psychological costs. People who "swallow their feelings" a lot tend to become depressed, stressed and dissatisfied. People working in servicesector jobs which require emotional performances typically experience these performances as inauthentic. This leads to psychological harm and even reduces life expectancy (Raunig, 2004). Children brought up using currently

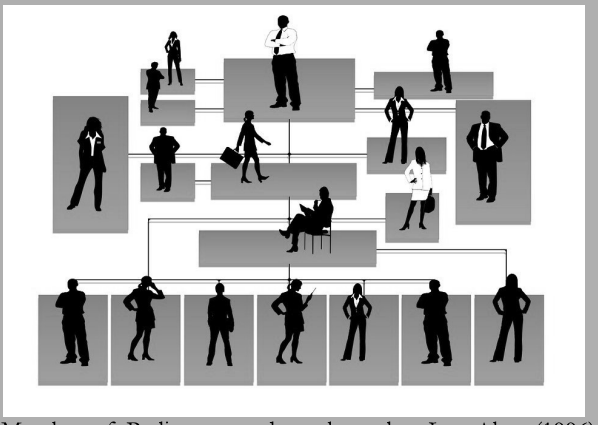
fashionable cybernetic methods (known as "parental management", "classroom management" and "authoritative parenting") develop similar psychological problems. They grow up with a lack of self-valuation, constant performance pressure, and existential malaise (Kohn, 2009).



This confirms the wider psychoanalytic insight that affects/emotions aren't simply destroyed by behavioural conditioning. Rather, they retreat to the unconscious. Emotions (or at least their expression) are inhibited or repressed, and become more harmful as a result. Psychoanalysis suggests that repressed sexuality and anger are at the root of many social as well as psychological problems. For example, racism is tied-in with fear and hatred of one's own sexuality, impulses, and anger (Fanon, 2008/1952; Theweleit, 1987). Historically, feminist consciousness raising was in large part about allowing women to feel and express anger which they had been taught to repress and hide. Prior to this process, repressed anger caused neuroses such as "housewife malaise" (see below, 948-9). Such examples show that people do not really alter their feelings in line with "feeling rules". Most often, they simply simulate the expected feelings, and inhibit expression of the prohibited feelings. They carry on feeling the things they aren't allowed to feel, whether consciously or unconsciously.

Despite his flirtations with Lacanian psychoanalysis, Bhabha clearly posits feeling rules for his readers and followers. Some emotions, such as anxiety, disjuncture, and discomfort, are good, whereas others, such as pride and anger, are bad. In general, Bhabha encourages emotions which are disruptive

of the ego, and disruptive of what he takes to be the arrogance of modern reason. Bhabha's feeling rules are surprisingly conventional. They resonate with those found in pop psychology and cognitive behavioural therapy, in contemporary managerialism, and in Third Way politics. In all these psycho-political approaches, people are urged to avoid (or at least not express) anger and excessive ego, to accept ambivalence and not try to control the future, and to embrace disjuncture and anxiety as learning opportunities. The kind of person who achieves such states is well-suited for a cybernetic system which relies on feedback and "nudging" for social control and exploitation. They become a kind of "homo cyberneticus", or cybernetic human (see Invisible Committee, 2015).



But, what does politics look like in a world of cybernetic beings? In an analysis of the British Third Way Prime Minister Tony Blair, former Member of Parliament and psychoanalyst Leo Abse (1996) suggested that the Third Way involves a "***politics of perversion***". Perversion is a clinical category with a particular meaning in psychoanalysis, not simply an insult or a term for unusual sexual practices. Perversion in the psychoanalytic sense is a type of character-structure or personality-structure. In both French and English psychoanalysis, perversion is taken to be a defence mechanism. It protects someone's character-structure from a perceived reality they find unbearable. In Lacanian theory, the main focus is on the traumatic recognition of sexual difference between women and men, which perverts have to deny or disavow.

disavow. In order to sustain this disavowal, they try to force others to acknowledge the absolute truth of their own beliefs, and to share and experience their pain. They often get caught in circular, non-falsifiable reasoning.

In the English psychoanalytic tradition, perversion is seen primarily as a defence against aggression, and the expected retaliation a person might suffer for acting aggressively. The perverse character-structure is formed in early childhood, when a child is or feels helpless in relation to their parents. On the one hand, the pervert develops a strong sadism or aggressivity towards a parent. They wish to obliterate or harm the parent. But on the other hand, they also develop a strong fear of the consequences of this desire. Firstly, if they try to harm the parent, the parent might retaliate, and obliterate or castrate the child. Secondly, if the dependent child succeeds in obliterating the parent, they will lose the support they depend on. Hence, the sadistic urge must be repressed and guarded against at all costs (though it remains very much active in a blocked state).

Perverts long for a state of perfect fusion with another or others, associated with the experience of early childhood before a separate personality is formed. Hence, the desire to be rid of the ego may be a significant element. There is also a degree of grandiosity, found especially in a tendency to exhibitionism, a belief that one does not exist unless one is looked at. Abse also implicates the idea of the other as primary over the self. Perverts often hold this belief because of their fixation at an early stage of childhood. One might also compare Nietzsche's (1996/1887) view that morality is a form of disavowed sadism. Sadistic enjoyment of social rituals of degradation, shaming and punishment might go hand-in-hand with a politics of perversion. Morality provides a sublimated way to enact sadistic aggression without violating social prohibitions.

A politics of perversion imagines a type of politics which is blissful and beyond disunity. Aggression and conflict must be prohibited and driven out of the lifeworld. This leads to an approach of consensus-by-diktat. On the one hand, real differences are downplayed. Abse recounts one of Blair's earliest parliamentary interventions, on a committee dealing with divorce settlements. Blair simply refused to accept that the financial controversies raised in the committee had any importance. Instead, he used empty phrases to create a sense of false consensus. Marriage should be seen as a common endeavour, not "pounds, shillings and pence". Abse suggests that this is typical of Blair's desire to place himself in a conflict-free zone. It is exemplary of a politics of perversion.

Later, the desire for a conflict-free zone expressed itself in Third Way beliefs that it is possible to have contradictory things at the same time. Blair rhetorically offered both capitalism and social justice, both economic growth and ecological sustainability, both a post-racial society and national identity, being "tough on crime" while also addressing its causes, strong borders and also humane treatment of refugees, and so on. These are different ways of avoiding conflict. All distinct categories must be blurred, so as to avoid conflict between them. Concepts are often blurred or fudged, which does a good job of covering over potential conflict by rhetorical means. Divisive words are gutted to take away their meaning and render them conflict-free. "Old" conflicts are to be replaced by "partnerships". Messianic themes of resurrection, rebirth and renewal are mobilised in what Abse calls a 'palingenetic myth'. This means a myth of resurrection through re-entering and being born once more from the womb. According to Abse, the Third Way and fascism have this palingenetic aspect in common. This myth has the effect of promoting the new and the young against the old. Third Way politicians aspire to eternal youth. Sometimes there is also linguistic militancy combined with an absence of corresponding actions.

On the other hand, "extremism" must be avoided at all costs. The avoidance of conflict requires that disagreements be suppressed. But this precludes an authentic consensus being reached. Instead, consensus is imposed by diktat. It is decided that a particular position is in fact the consensus. Anything which breaches the imposed consensus is subject to aggression or passive-aggression. There is effectively an order not to think certain things – what Žižek (2001) calls a *denkverbot*. Hence, opponents on both sides of a particular divide are often viciously dismissed. This has depoliticising effects. In particular, any recognition of class struggle and the limits to capitalism becomes impossible. The Third Way was accompanied by a watering-down of radicalism in academia, caused partly by government funding criteria. It was also accompanied by vicious attacks on the civil liberties of people who rejected the imposed consensus from any direction – radical Muslims, anti-capitalist protesters, animal liberationists, but also racists and sexists. In Britain, it also involved a draconian attempt to stamp out petty nuisance in everyday life – the so-called "anti-social behaviour" agenda.

In a politics of perversion, open conflict needs to be avoided. Political confrontation and disagreement are frightening because they trigger latent sadism, and resultant fears of annihilation. In practice, the attempt to suppress disagreement often (paradoxically) provokes conflicts. Such conflicts are avoided or suppressed through varying degrees of control-freakery. Abse specifically relates the politics of perversion to rootlessness. The absence of secure roots is one of the conditions for infantile terrors to remain unresolved and continue into adulthood. Given the limited parental care now provided as a result of neoliberal over-work, and the rigid "authoritative" disciplinary regimes common in contemporary families and schools (in which aggression and deviance lead to symbolic social death in isolation units), it is likely that personality-structures of this type are becoming more common.

A closer comparison to Bhabha can be made in relation to the more recent Third Way discourse of Barack Obama. As America's first black president, and (like Blair) as someone with a rootless childhood, Obama's rhetoric necessarily inhabits Bhabha's terrain of disjuncture and racialised difference. His speeches have attracted applause from some postcolonial and Derridean-inspired scholars (Terrill, 2009; Frank, 2009). However, other postcolonial theorists criticise the ways he downplays American imperialism (Viberg, 2011). Obama campaigned using broad, sweeping rhetoric about change, unity, and hope. He provided vague symbolic promises to which hearers could attach their own desires and fantasies (Ceaser et al., 2009; Coe and Reitzes, 2010:406). Like Blair, Obama stressed moral values over concrete policies. He emphasised national unity, and the 'transcendence' of divisions (Murphy, 2009:313). And he often used 'dissociations... intended to transform the relationship between contraries' (Frank, 2011:605).

This allowed him to rhetorically disavow differences between worldviews and policies, without actually overcoming them in practice. For example, his 'More Perfect Union' speech blurs racial boundaries. His style combined the Evangelical Christianity popular on the American right with liberal and progressive themes. Like Blair, he offered both free markets and equity, both growth and sustainability, both tradition and progress. As with Blair, this consensus discourse was accompanied by vicious attacks on those who resisted change. Listeners were drawn in by Obama's almost messianic rhetoric. They could 'attribute almost anything, and believe almost anything was possible' (Bligh and Kohles, 2009:485). This, of course, set people up for massive disappointment (Dilliplane, 2012:140). There are noticeable similarities with Derridean theory in Obama's approach to deconstructing binaries and appealing to an undetermined future. There are also noticeable similarities with Bhabha in his view of never-ending progress, his positions on race, and his reliance on rhetorical proficiency in lieu of substance. Obama is very clearly within the politics of perversion as theorised by Abse.

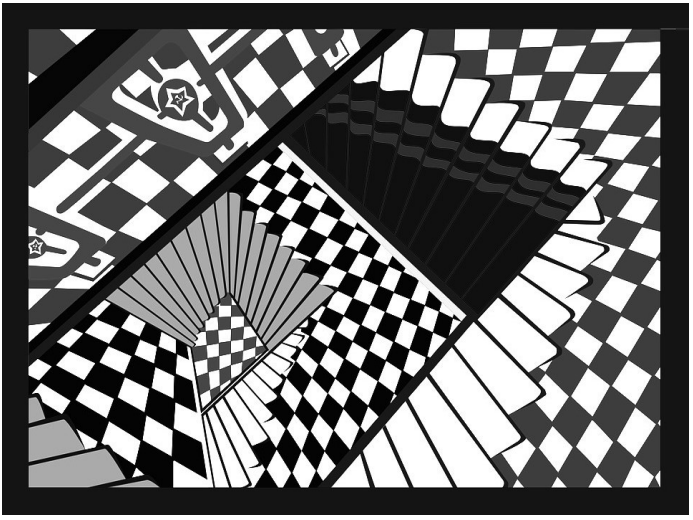
Is there a politics of perversion in Bhabha's work? There are certainly several of the features. An imposed consensus which rejects all category-distinctions. A low tolerance for anger and antagonism, combined with aggressive hostility to critics. A tendency to blur language. A linguistic militancy without corresponding concrete proposals. A quiet imposition of a false consensus on important questions (in Bhabha's case, basic ontology). A goal of returning to a pre-Oedipal immersion in the field of becoming. An attempt to disavow non-co-constituted differences. A celebration of rootlessness. A fetish of "newness" and dislike of established identities and systems, regardless of their content. A belief that one does not exist unless seen and recognised. Exhibitionism, manifested in an exhuberant rhetorical style. An apparent desire both to annihilate the colonial "parent" and to keep it forever close and avoid ever annihilating it. Positioning oneself endlessly in a "teacher" role, and claiming to know the other's desire, are also perverse traits from a Lacanian point of view. So is the centrality of mechanisms of disavowal in general. If there are tickboxes for a politics of perversion, Bhabha ticks quite a few.

There is one important exception. In principle, Bhabha's feeling rules differ from Blair's or Obama's in allowing much greater tolerance for ambiguity and ambivalence. In this, he very much challenges the politics of perversion, which refuses ambivalence because it is an unwanted reminder of repressed aggression towards a beloved Other. In principle, Bhabha does not seek to do away with contradiction or conflict. In practice, however, ambivalence is managed through a predetermined structural model. Certainly Bhabha's approach involves conflict avoidance. Rival positions are juxtaposed, almost as if there is no contact between them. The transformative work is meant to be done by this simple act of juxtaposition. His dislike of anger – to the point of linking Fanon to bin Laden (see below, 875) – is suggestive of a discursive structure similar to Blair's and Obama's. The conflict-free zone and its aggressive enforcement is also arguably actualised in the current trend towards "safe spaces" with rigid conduct rules and quick recourse to exclusion. This ideal of conflict-free space is associated with the type of politics into which theories like Bhabha's have evolved.

Bhabha often seems to glorify experiences of precarity, disjuncture, and trauma. He treats it only in terms of its systemic, cybernetic effects of disrupting categories and social systems. What Fanon took to be abhorrent depersonalisation, for Bhabha is the progressive destruction of the modern idea of 'Man' (LC, 40-1). Feeling one is stared at by a disembodied 'evil eye' is a good thing, because it breaks down the illusion of subjective depth (LC, 53), and disrupts the scopic drive of power. The double standards of colonial government as both democratic and authoritarian are not to be condemned as 'hypocrisy'. Such a condemnation is 'to moralize' writing and government. Rather, this doubleness is valuable in showing the role of the supplement in sustaining the primary identity (LC, 95-6). The image of Oriental despotism is progressive in providing a distorted mirror-image of European monarchies (LC, 98). Even something as horrific as slavery is presented as progressive in the sense that it produces disjuncture (LC, 5). Trauma disrupts the "narcissism" of self-confident subjects and the "fantasy" of fullness. Therefore, for Bhabha, it is politically progressive. The affective suffering which accompanies trauma and anxiety is rarely recognised in Bhabha's work. Rather, it is seen as radically transformative because of its disruptive effects on subjectivity. The possibility that systemic power, rather than personal subjective integration, is the main problem is never considered. The *unheimlich* experience of overexposure, for instance, may well be a dysfunctional effect of technologically-mediated immediacy (see below, 624-6).

Bhabha's approach effectively sublimates the suffering involved in trauma. Because subjects don't really exist, and suffering is justified by the higher good of social change, its affective import is denied. This renders it bearable. Psychological survival means 'to live in the unhomely world' (LC, 18). 'The past-present', i.e. the time-lag, 'becomes part of the necessity, not the nostalgia, of living' (LC, 7). In simpler terms, "that's life". The sublimation of suffering, its neutralisation through the denial of the subject, negates the necessity for fundamental changes in the outer world. And simply *being* in the disjunctive, uncomfortable position of being a hybrid or mimic is itself transformative according to Bhabha. What the hybrid or mimic *says or does* is almost irrelevant. Their mere existence

puts on display the disavowal underpinning colonialism (see below, 454-6). In practice, this means that the simple presence of people from marginalised backgrounds in places of power is progressive in itself. Both their own suffering, and the suffering they cause to "privileged" people, are justified and rendered bearable through sublimation. The hybrid is doing the necessary work of disrupting self-present identity through her/his/their mere presence. This theory of sublimation provides a handy justification for unprincipled attempts at upward mobility, and for continued adverse incorporation in institutions which offer few opportunities for radical change.



Bhabha also seems confident that the sublimation of suffering which can be achieved through certain forms of mystical practice or psychoanalysis will occur spontaneously, on a mass scale, as a direct result of disjunction. This seems naïve, given that the evidence points rather to an explosion of reactive movements seeking reassurance in fixed categories. This rather idealistic perception is belied by the social effects of precarity, including resurgent racism and fundamentalism. Bhabha discusses traumatic moments of disjunction. But he seems to see exclusively the potential for post-traumatic growth. He ignores the danger of post-traumatic stress, and submersion in trauma.

The external, relational nature of subject-constitution posited in Bhabha's theory is arguably at the root of this blockage. A contrast can be made here with the rival perspective put forward by Bergson, and adopted by Deleuze and Guattari. From Bergson's point of view, 'pure' categories exist, but not in the outer world. They exist in the field of time, as formations of desire and affect. This theory posits the field of subjective meaning as autonomous from social structures. It is important to identify 'pure' categories – distinct zones of affect and desire – even though most things in the outer, 'actual' world are mixed. Concepts which are mixed lead to confusion and ineffective analysis. The point, rather, is to show how different 'pure' forces combine in mixed combinations in the actual world. This theory recognises the autonomy of the virtual field. In contrast, the field of desire and affect has no autonomy in structuralist-influenced theories such as Bhabha's. This is perhaps why Bhabha's theory often seems so lacking in a temporal element.

Social movement discussions of experiences of powerlessness follow different routes. The experience of failure, of nothing working, is attributed to learned helplessness arising from defeat. The sense that decisive action is futile causes a retreat into reflection. At the same time, the misattribution of structural blockages to individual failings is deeply entrenched in neoliberal ideology. People who are in bad circumstances due to repressive policies and economic conditions are encouraged to think there is something wrong with *them* – they have bad strategies, aren't thinking positively enough, and so on (Sometimes Explode, 2014). The same logic, applied inside social movements, internalises blame for the movement's failure to overcome (for example) racism. The externalisation of blame to dominant social structures, *outside* oneself and the movement, is effectively prohibited. And Bhabha rejects the idea of disalienation as nostalgia for an imagined lost plenitude (LC, 53). This destroys the possibility of radical change, and entrenches powerlessness.
As we have seen, Bhabha values slowness, reflection, and "difficult choices". He places hope in a quiet and contemplative attitude, rather than projectile anger (see above, 212-19,

331-46). Such abstract hopes are very different from the empowering experience of moments of agency. They are fundamentally passive. In many ways, Bhabha seems to be attaching radical hopes to reformist strategies by reducing the former to future hopes to be passively injected into present, non-radical activities. By disconnecting hope from affirmative desire and the will-to-power, Bhabha hamstrings its radical potential.

The Problem of Trauma

Bhabha's focus on socio-linguistic effects rather than subjective emotions arguably causes him to misunderstand works focused on traumatic experiences, such as *Beloved*. This is a misreading which stems directly from his structuralist theoretical assumptions. For Bhabha, victims of oppression are above all 'signified upon', through processes of projection (LC, 16). The primary violence is linguistic, not economic or physical. What is projected is affective – fears, anxieties, hatreds – but for Bhabha the process is primarily one of signification. This in turn entails a confusion about the nature of trauma – that it is primarily an experience of being silenced, or spoken over. Rather, I would maintain that trauma is primarily a *bodily* experience, of being rendered powerless and vulnerable in one's corporeal and affective life. The signification of trauma, its rationalisations and so on, are secondary to its impact at the level of affect. It is precisely because trauma is caught in the body, and only signifiable during or after healing, that it leads to disjunctive forms of writing.

Most therapies for trauma seek to recompose narratives, rather than keep them in a state of disjunction. In psychology, traumatic blockages are usually resolved by conceptualising and processing the traumatic experience or event. By bringing the event into normal memory (through testimony, visualisation and so on), one defuses its extraordinary force in the unconscious. Poststructuralism of the type Bhabha subscribes to rejects this process of healing by insisting that the breakdown of normal memory and subjectivity is desirable and progressive. It effectively counsels people to remain constantly in a traumatised, depressive or anxious stance. Hence, there is a strong resistance to any process of healing (in the conventional sense) in Bhabha's work. He argues that one needs to remember barbarism (trauma), not by working through it and making it safe, but in a form which retains 'some of the anxiety' and 'terror'. Otherwise we can't 'confront' or 'move beyond' barbarism (Byrne, 2009:151).

Processes of healing from trauma involve recovering and sharing some of the anxiety and terror. In this sense, Bhabha is right that one cannot move beyond trauma without recovering its affects. But this is an inherent part of the 'ameliorative witnessing' he rejects (see above, 337). Further, in 'getting beyond' trauma, these affects are dissolved or mitigated, as the traumatic memory is re-encoded as an ordinary memory. This seems to be the element of healing which Bhabha rejects. Yet this implies that he also rejects 'moving beyond' trauma, for all his lip-service to it. He seeks a kind of permanent melancholia in which resolution never comes. And he seeks this zone of affect because it is a useful way of keeping people in an inbetween state which Bhabha desires for existential, political or aesthetic reasons. People are to stay traumatised and depressed, because it is *cybernetically useful* for them to feel this way.

The politics of affect in Bhabha also seem to be designed to preserve eternal melancholia (depression) by keeping people in the zone of trauma. Trauma is incommunicable by definition. But the process of bringing trauma into regular memory is an important part

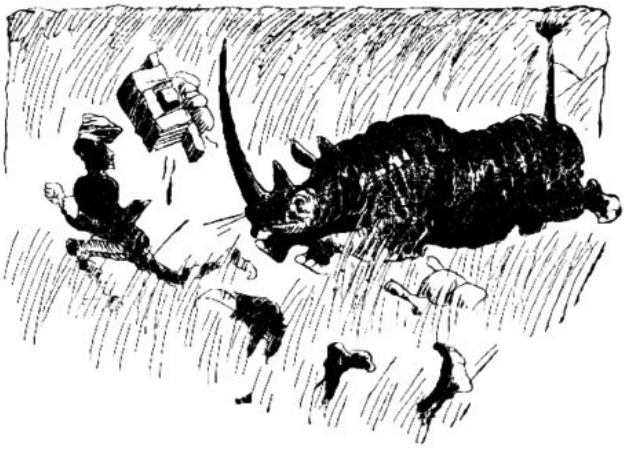
of the process of healing. In general, healing from trauma is taken to occur through subjective reintegration (Herman, 1997). Unspeakable truths come to be spoken – but in that very process, cease to be unspeakable. They become speakable, and language is reshaped around them. But Bhabha and other scholars like him seek to keep these truths unspeakable, and keep language in the structure it had before they were spoken. This conservation is necessary in order to sublimate the experience of trauma, to remain in the third space of inbetweenness. This is why they reject revolutionary overcoming of oppressive discourses. Yet this also requires that the oppressed remain in a trauma zone. The sublimation of trauma and displacement means that one never heals from trauma. Instead, one is trapped in its constant repetition, so as to gain existential significance from it.

As we have seen (above, 85, 145, 190, 342; see also below, 913-18), survival is an important part of Bhabha's politics. This arguably exposes the lack of a positive vision of self-actualisation or "life". While survival might be preferable to extinction, it is not a strong affirmative goal, but more a second-best position. It is something which occurs in the face of an adversity which remains determinant. One "survives" a hostile context in which one cannot win, where the enemy is eternally victorious. "Survival" can also become a pretext for accommodation. Paresh Chandra argues that Bhabha 'overlooks significant aspects' of the postcolonial situation. He subscribes to a 'quietism that celebrates "survival"'

(2012:199). In other words, Bhabha avoids political contestation of colonisation. He cheers on resilience within it, but not resistance to it. Chandra adds that Bhabha seeks always to show that things are not as bad as they seem. However bad oppression gets, there is always space for 'the subject' to 'breathe' (2012:208). While it may be true that there is always some space for resistance, it is painful to experience such cramped space in practice. To value such survival, Bhabha has to ignore or downplay the pain it involves. Survival is also a negative term, for instance, in Situationism. This theory contrasts 'survival' with 'life', suggesting that worthwhile life always involves joy, play, intense experience, passion, and so on. In Situationism, survival is an almost abject condition of subordination to the system (Vaneigem, 1963-5). The problem with capitalism is precisely the fact that it allows survival but not life. The progressive political thing to do is to go beyond survival towards life.

As we have seen, Bhabha also values anxiety as a progressive affect (see above, 331-46). This conclusion is discontinuous with evidence of the social roles of affect. Anxiety can have a disabling effect on social movements (IPC, 2014) and generate authoritarian, reactionary forms of politics (Appadurai, 2006). The type of affect Bhabha encourages does little to strengthen social movements. Rather, it is destructive of the affects which sustain them. Wolfi Landstreicher has observed the effects of this kind of politics in practice. 'The only outcome I can see from such a way of dealing with these matters (and it is certainly the only outcome I have ever seen) is the creation of a bunch of shy, yet inquisitorial mice tip-toeing around each other for fear of being judged, and just as incapable of attacking the foundations of this society as they are of relating to each other' (2005:n.p.). In practice, people who follow this direction become less, not more, transformative. Similarly, Bhabha does not ask the question of when, or under what conditions, the euphoria of transformation turns into anxiety or trauma, or vice-versa. These questions are too contingent and localised for his theoretical project. Yet they are vital in terms of any kind of effective anti-oppressive politics. Affectively, Bhabha provides a feeling of alienation and dissatisfaction, without offering any possible outlet.

This is politically and personally unproductive, and sets the scene for defeat by right-wing forces better able to generate empowering affects.



I believe that Bhabha misunderstands affect for two reasons. Firstly, because he sees the role of anti-oppressive politics as the destruction of meaning and the ego. Secondly, because he is interested only in the discursive function of particular affects, not their subjective constitution or internal dynamics. The difficulties dealing with affect have political consequences. In effect, Bhabha requires that social construction be more-or-less arbitrary. It arises from processes of identity-formation and their antinomies. People are blank slates, who can be conditioned or interpellated as just about anything. If social construction also involves a 'real' element to which signifiers are attached (whether this is a pre-representational flow of desire, an empirical reality, or a social relation more fundamental than identity-formation), then his account is unsustainably idealist. If for example the actions of capitalists, statists, or colonisers are associated with a social logic immanent to their mode of production, then subverting their identity-construction by creating ambiguity in its constitutive binary is of limited use. Similarly, if desire is prior to rather than constituted by identity, then the deconstruction of its social constructions (or rationalisations) is of limited use.

The issue of negative affect is connected to Bhabha's valorisation of transgression. Postcolonial (and poststructuralist) language often glorifies the transgression of boundaries. Yet such transgression can be experienced as trauma and violence. This leads to ambivalence within the theory, because boundary violations against marginalised people are also condemned. For example, colonialism was itself a traumatic violation of the boundaries and identities of colonised peoples. The term 'boundary violation' is commonly used to refer to abuse in relationships, particularly sexual abuse. Both senses of 'boundaries' have their root in psychoanalytic analysis of the importance of the self-other or self-world boundary in identity-formation. Boundary violations or 'transgressions' produce unwanted emotional effects (fear, disempowerment, discomfort, lack of safety, defensiveness, aggression or passive-aggression) in people who identify with the boundary. This process of disruption is alternately valued and feared in identity-based theories.

This assumption that experiences of disjunction bring about radical effects has been criticised by other scholars. For example, Eleanor Byrne contrasts Bhabha's 'upbeat' view of British culture with Paul Gilroy's 'melancholic' view in *After Empire* (Byrne, 2009:116). In contrast to Bhabha's celebration of the effects of disjuncture, Gilroy argues that Britain's post-imperial condition includes an inability to face, let alone mourn, the change in national conditions (Gilroy, 2004:98). Kristeva makes a similar argument about France (Byrne, 2009:117). One might equally talk about America, Australia or even Italy in these terms. Postcolonial theorists tend to treat melancholia (depression) as irreducible. It's an effect of the constitutive process of subject-formation. Instead, Gilroy talks about replacing melancholia with mourning, and moving beyond the blockage it causes (Byrne, 2009:118). Žižek also criticises theorists such as Bhabha for rehabilitating or celebrating melancholy. It is by celebrating melancholy that minority intellectuals can play the capitalist game (Žižek, 2000). More broadly, Dominic LaCapra accuses Anglo-American poststructuralists of reducing contingent traumas and absences to constitutive, irreducible lack. This ontologisation of lack leads to melancholy (LaCapra, 1999).

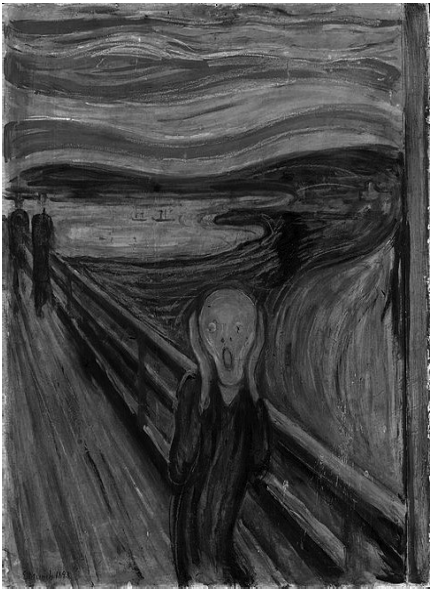
Is Bhabha's Affective Politics Politically Sustainable?

On a subjective level, the processes valued by Bhabha are stressful and cause mainly suffering. It is disturbing, from a human point of view, the extent to which Bhabha values and encourages painful affective states. As we have seen, Bhabha values anxiety, depression and panic (above, 331-46). This leads to a question of whether a situation dominated by such affects is sustainable. I'd question whether the constant tension of living between unresolvable differences – which Bhabha himself terms menacing and anxiety-inducing – is actually bearable for most people. The absence not only of social harmony, but of any hope or even desire for it, creates a situation of permanent uncertainty which is generative of destructive, reactive affects. Anxiety, as an experienced affect or emotion, does not have the affirmative, transformative force Bhabha gives it. Politically, it seems impossible to expect democratic or post-political administrative regimes to survive such a situation of generalised dissatisfaction. It seems inevitable that public opinion or technical efficiency will push them towards a restoration of strong binaries. The inability to push through the liminal zone to a revolutionary transformation guarantees a persistent organic crisis, and a 'Bonapartist' or 'Caesarist' pseudo-resolution (c.f. Bligh and Kohles, 2009).

There is something vaguely moralistic in the demand that people simply bear this burden, and the denunciation of those who cannot or will not. It is also strangely western and modern – echoing the original sin and unreachable God of Judeo-Christian and Zoroastrian traditions, rather than the abundance and natural balance of indigenous conceptions. In one discussion, Bhabha relates his own Parsi (and Zoroastrian) background to his embrace of hybridity. He admits being angry with those who see his Parsi positionality as a kind of bourgeois, Anglicised complicity. He also relates this to a sense of 'original guilt' he experiences as a Parsi (Byrne, 2009:5-6). This sense of original guilt makes sense of the unremitting negativity of Bhabha's theorising.

I believe that this is why Bhabha fails to respond effectively to the political conditions of the present (post-9/11). He misunderstands the ways people and social forces respond to situations. This failure is due to a kind of psychological or existential reductionism which is unduly optimistic about the sublimation of negative experiences. In particular, Bhabha often misunderstands how social affects (or emotions) work. He portrays anxiety as an empowering emotion, when in fact it leads to the very essentialisms he loathes. He also misunderstands trauma and healing, seeking the affects of healing without the corresponding transcendence of the trauma's unspeakability. It is possible that sublimation of suffering, as advocated by Bhabha, is only accessible to elite and middling groups. It is a much harder "sell" to marginalised, exploited and excluded people. It thus contributes to the creation of a complacent, Third Way left which abandons the working-class to right-wing populists, the excluded to gangs, and marginalised groups to an angry identity politics it both encourages and denounces.

The politics of anxiety are complex and multiple. Some scholars blame widespread anxiety on neoliberal conditions. Possible sources include precarious work, affective stress arising from information overload, out-of-control capital flows and so on (IPC, 2014; Berardi, 2009). Others discuss the ways in which these flows generate violent reactionary movements such as Hindu communalism, political Islam, contemporary European racism, and historical fascism (Appadurai, 2006; Theweleit, 1987). In contrast, studies of social movement emergence suggest that feelings of empowerment and voice are crucial. Participants feel themselves to be shaking off their abjection and passivity, standing up and exercising power (Wood, 2001; Solomon, 1971; Flam, 2007; Routledge and Simons, 1995; Fanon, 1967). This experience of empowerment sharply contrasts with narratives of passivity and abjection prior to the act of revolt. Affects of anxiety, panic, depression and melancholy are not transformative in a positive sense. They decompose social movements and sustain hierarchical social relations – 'cultural submersion' as Freire (1970a, 1970b) names such subordination.



In an exchange on the subject of identity politics, Wendy Brown criticises the way minority positions can become stuck in ressentiment, based on a fixation on pain and suffering. Such a position remains ambivalently attached to the dominant ideal it opposes. She seeks to reconstruct a moment prior to wounding. In response, Bhabha argues that there is no 'worlding' without a 'wounding'. In other words, existence requires trauma as a constitutive moment (AMD, 134). Hence, Bhabha does not exactly embrace the ressentiment of certain identity-political positions, but he encourages the focus on suffering and on the relationship to a dominant group. Instead of healing from trauma, Bhabha advocates its celebration as a constitutive moment of existence. He dooms oppressed people to never-ending historical trauma without resolution. This is unsurprising, since trauma forms the main social bond in Bhabha's theory (see below, 915-20). Without trauma, there is nothing holding disparate subject-positions together.

In valuing the subjectively disruptive effects of "postmodernity", Bhabha comes dangerously close to embracing neoliberal capitalism. Marx argued that capital makes all that is solid melt into air. This is central to Marx's critical support for colonialism, as a process which destroys earlier social forms and paves the way for world socialism. Bhabha similarly treats the affects and subjective collapse arising from neoliberalism and precarity as politically progressive. He thinks they pave the way for a full, postcolonial liminality. In addition, the emphasis on personal changes and ego-dissolution – rather than (or as a cause of) social change – is broadly continuous with the ways in which neoliberalism handles its own psychological effects. In some ways, Bhabha offers a linguistically elitist, identity-focused version of wider discourses of self-help, lifelong learning, flexibility and adaptation. His lack of concern for the subjective suffering which arises from precarity exposes his complicity in neoliberal discourses of 'magical voluntarism', or the transcendence of material conditions through willpower (Smail, 1993; Fisher, 2014). In Bhabha's case, willpower – an ego attribute – is displaced into sublimation or aestheticisation. It involves *jouissance* (enjoyment or meaning-production or valorisation or intense connection) derived from the process of displacement, dispossession and

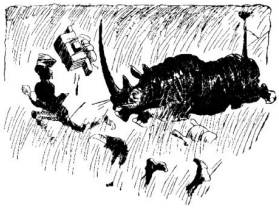
vulnerability itself. This is a way of libidinally investing in, and thus defending and extending, the social effects of neoliberal precarity.

Bhabha's analysis of Rwanda (see above, 345-6) shows how his affective politics works in practice. In the Rwandan genocide, people projected their own hatred onto others. They committed genocide to pre-empt a genocide they imagined others were about to commit. Bhabha portrays this situation as if a natural internal force (the death drive) is wrongly expressed in hatred of others. But isn't this a structurally predisposed dynamic in a social situation marked by constant anxiety and insecurity? And if so, isn't its pathologisation as an inner dysfunction somewhat premature?

What is missing from Bhabha's account is the entire field of social, economic and political factors influencing Rwandan politics – the precarity stemming from neoliberalism (mediated in Africa by structural adjustment and resultant regime weakening), the use of ethnicity in neopatrimonial or neocolonial political systems as a code-word for struggles over distribution of state-captured resources, the land scarcity particular to Rwanda, the fusion of neopatrimonial states with organised crime, the legitimation crisis facing the Rwandan regime and African dictatorships in general during the democratising wave of the 1990s, and the diplomatic and media politics through which the regime sought to exploit western perceptions (for instance, relying on French government support and manipulating charities to maintain a government-in-exile after their defeat). Bhabha evacuates politics and leaves a simple story in which affective/conceptual abstractions do battle (c.f. Barthes, 1972).

To cause massacres, the regime's media deliberately used rhetoric designed to generate terror and anxiety. They seem to have done this deliberately and cynically, for political reasons, knowing full well that they were lying (see Hintjens, 1999). This succeeded in this case, but does not always succeed. The Hutu majority population fell for it, and the fact that they were manipulated is one of the reasons the genocide has been easily forgiven by

many Rwandans (c.f. Uvin, 2009 on neighbouring Burundi). Yet for Bhabha, the main issue seems to be simply to identify the ways in which affect is channelled or 'constructed' by rhetoric. Bhabha divides the field of affect into good and bad affects: Rwandans died because they took the bad route of projecting anxiety outwards, rather than the good route of sublimating anxiety. If only they'd read more poststructuralism, perhaps they would have been spared! It's just a shame that Bhabha's work is not yet available in audio format in the Kinyarwanda language, and that so few Rwandans have the eighteen years of formal education which are apparently needed to make sense of his texts.



Sarcasm aside, Bhabha's analysis of the Rwandan genocide as a kind of reflexivity deficiency or ego excess is effectively a moral reading. It denounces Rwandan political culture for lacking the sophistication of Bhabha's worldview, ignoring material factors. Bhabha and other postcolonial and critical race scholars frequently use similar moralising/culturalist approaches to explain everything from Trump's election victory to spree killings, from Hindu communalism in India to gang violence in South Africa, from the wars in the former Yugoslavia to the 9/11 attacks, from femicide in Latin America to suicides among young men in the USA. It's a cookie-cutter explanation for the ills of contemporary society, particularly those involving anger, fear, hatred, and/or violence. But this kind of moral reading of the destructive affects arising from precarity has the effect of letting neoliberalism and capitalism off the hook. Bhabha's work carries the implication that people succumb to such group irrationality only because they are insufficiently healed, aware of contingency, and content with the nature of the world. It is only if they maintain the pathological ego-desire for security, and 'project' their problems outwards, that precarity manifests in hatred. If people internalise instead of externalise, or maintain ironic distance through a superego rejection of "the subject", they will not succumb.

However, the tidal wave of hatred sweeping the world today seems to give the lie to this analysis. Bhabhaesque irony and reflexivity may act as a dam against the tide, but no dam is strong enough to hold waters of any strength indefinitely. There is sociological evidence that degrees of security and wellbeing influence degrees of closure or openness in communities (Skinner, 1971). The question of how resilient people are, how well people handle overwhelming uncertainty, is secondary to the question of whether the social world causes such uncertainty to begin with. Cybernetic neoliberal capitalism causes a *lot* of uncertainty and anxiety, as Bhabha recognises. But Bhabha imagines that this destabilisation has progressive consequences. His moralisation and shaming of anger and hatred is a necessary consequence of this fallacious belief. By psychologising and moralising phenomena involving hatred, Bhabha conceals their social roots in the very disjunctive, displaced, uncertain living conditions he values. In principle, people who are already marginal, or who are able to 'read' the disjunctive context, supposedly do not succumb to hatred. In practice, marginalised people are at least as prone as privileged people to embrace styles of politics Bhabha dislikes. The question is not only why Americans vote for Trump or Italians for the Northern League, but why Filipinos vote for Duterte, Indians for Modi, Egyptians for Morsi or Sisi, and Colombians for Duque.

Bhabha predicts that disjuncture will improve political identities. But what happens when disjuncture and disruption do not cause existential awakening, but instead, waves of hatred and fear? Bhabha's response is, in effect, to simply exhort people to adopt his preferred existential stance. People don't respond the way they're predicted to respond, so there must be something wrong with them – not something wrong with the prediction. If, instead, the outbursts of projection and hatred are effects of structural conditions, the appropriate political response would be quite different. The psychologically unrealistic nature of Bhabha's orientation to uncomfortable, disjunctive affects would be clear. In common with various self-help therapies, and the doctors working for torturers, Bhabha offers theories which bandage up the wounds caused by neoliberalism so that people can carry on 'surviving' in unbearable conditions. He does nothing to take away the unbearable conditions.

Towards a Radical Affective Politics

Bhabha's affective politics does not follow directly and necessarily from his valuing of liminal experiences. It is possible to produce liminal (in-between) zones and experiences

which do not conform to the pessimistic affective structure of Derridean ontology. Bakhtinian carnivalesque, Bey's Temporary Autonomous Zones (Bey, 1985), the antinomianism of medieval religious revolutionaries, and the operation of shamanism and other forms of indigenous ritual are cases in point. In Bakhtin, the boundary-crossing which subverts authority is fundamentally joyful and affirmative. By laughing at authority-figures and destroying separations among positionalities, carnival participants create an empowering, affirmative variety of non-dualism (Robinson, 2011a). In a recent piece, I have argued that moments of revolt involve a type of liminal transformative power which is experienced as magical. This operates through an experience of empowerment and disinhibition (Robinson, 2018a). I would argue that the experience of euphoria, ecstasy and spiritual power - a breakdown of the false ego, but also an intensified sense of the true, higher self - is more typical of these kinds of euphoric liminal experiences than of Bhabha's melancholy. Turner's description of Orphic rituals, for example, suggests an experience of the immediacy of the world, and not an experience of meaninglessness. I believe this has ontological significance. Bhabha and Derrida stop at the limits of the text. After suspending the text and the ego, there is, in a sense, *nothing there*. All one can do is deconstruct the text to produce a zone of uncertainty. On the contrary, liminal experiences generally open people to another level of existence, an extra-representational level. The recognition of any such level of existence is prohibited in Derridean theory.

Radical social movements are based on very different affective structures from those favoured by Bhabha. For instance, post-left anarchy generally relies on joy, peak experiences and lived immediacy (Robinson, 2018a; Robinson and Tormey, 2009b). Anti-colonial movements relied on experiences of empowerment, voice and agency (Fanon, 1967; Solomon, 1971; Wood, 2001). Flam (2007) shows how affects of self-valorisation – affects which strengthen the ego, and weaken humility in relation to those in power – are common to many kinds of social movements. Routledge and Simons (1995) show how affirmative and projectile affects are central to various diverse social movements. These affects are most noticeable in periods of intense, successful revolt.

There is emancipatory potential in the idea of relating through flows and connections rather than identities. Bhabha's border space is a space which seems able to articulate distinct elements without a unifying structure (or 'trunk'). Instead, things coexist in a mixed state. However, the idea for Bhabha is not to create a 'pluralist anarchy' of identities. Rather, it is to alter the basis for connections among identities (LC, 6). Because Bhabha has no horizon of political transformation, he remains stuck in the moment of transgression and displacement of the existing system. Today, the valorisation of humility, wounding, 'responsibility' (in practice, guilt and shame), discomfort, and other affects of the kinds favoured by Bhabha has become more common in social movements. This is partly 'making a virtue out of necessity'. These affects are in any case prevalent in neoliberalism, and portraying them as 'radical' is a covert kind of ego-boost. It is also partly a result of the influence of postructuralist/identity theories in academia, which have filtered into student movements, and then into wider social movements.

There is little evidence that movements in the global South, or movements of marginalised groups – movements like the Brazilian MST, the Zapatistas, the various Niger Delta resistance and protest groups, Chinese 'mass incidents', or urban revolts by African-Americans, let alone the ethnoreligious and communalist movements widespread in the global South – are actually motivated by an existential orientation anything like Bhabha's. If anything, Bhabha can only show that they structurally function in a similar way. In his

references to the Indian 'Mutiny', the Handsworth 'riots', the miners' strike and Franz Fanon (for example), Bhabha interprets and sublimates his examples in such a way as to encourage the reader towards his own existential position. He does not examine what participants thought they were doing. In doing so, he makes his use of such examples largely irrelevant to the people who generate them.

Bhabha's approach is both linked to, and different from, the type of transgressive binary-breaking associated with radical approaches such as Situationists, autonomists, Hakim Bey's immediatism, the 60s/70s counterculture, and writers such as Deleuze, Guattari, Bakhtin, and Nietzsche. The radicalism of such approaches is based on the simultaneous experience of a 'body without organs' (or a world beyond binaries) and a type of projectile power which extends into the future. Bhabha has the former but not the latter. There are many cases where transgression and inbetweenness are experienced as euphoric, intensely enjoyable and liberating. Raves, carnivals and carnivalesque, participant experiences of militant direct action and other social movement phenomena, all fall into this category. However, these types of transgression all involve elements of projectile power and intensity. If they involve decomposition of the self/ego, then this is voluntary and is experienced as heightening or improvement, not discomfort or loss. The aspect of affirmative power is vital in understanding social movements' transformative force. Postcolonial theorists seem to prefer types of inbetweenness which are experienced passively, without an experience of empowerment. This requires valorisation of negative affects such as anxiety, because these kinds of passive experiences do not convey the power which renders other kinds of inbetweenness euphoric.

Empirical researchers often use Bhabha's terms to conceptualise various kinds of mixture, hybridity and inbetweenness – although they do not necessarily endorse the contours of Bhabha's high theory. For example, David G. Guttierez uses the idea of a 'third space' to understand the identities and spaces of Mexican-Americans (1999:488). In particular, it refers to 'unstable, interstitial social spaces' which are 'semi-separate' from the mainstream. These spaces are characterised by 'social syncretism, experimentation, and pastiche', and by everyday survival and the reproduction of social life (1999:497). Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (1992) similarly use the term to denote local views of community which are based both on local belonging and on reaction to external exclusions and 'otherings'. Crucially, these social-scientific appropriations do not copy the Derridean and Lacanian aspects of Bhabha's theory. They are mainly focused on concrete ideas of place and community. 'Third space' thus becomes largely interchangeable with terms such as 'homeplace', 'region of refuge', 'enclave', or even 'autonomous zone'.

Hence, in practice, these uses of Bhabha's concepts move towards a model of otherness as autonomy or escape, which is discontinuous with Bhabha's model. Guttierez is particularly interested in how the Mexican-Americans he studied sought to 'live their lives in an alternative social space that had little to do with formal citizenship' or other marks of legitimacy (1999:503). He provides an image of autonomous spaces, rather than strategic occupations of included positions. He also notes that some Mexican-Americans have very traditional ideas of nationality and identity (1999:509). However, neither integration nor multiculturalism are relevant to large numbers of people, who remain semi-separate or habitually mobile (1999:511, 516). Some 'vote with their feet' against integration, either through cyclical migration or through a refusal to participate in civic culture (1999:517). It is this semi-separation, and the lack of resonance of national-scale discourses, which leads to new forms of political identity (1999:512) and competing affiliations on multiple scales (1999:514).

Although Gutierrez's paper uses Bhabha's terminology, it reaches almost diametrically opposed conclusions. The withdrawal from public political life Gutierrez chronicles is very different from Bhabha's model of inclusive cosmopolitanism through the reconfiguration of dominant discourses. It is closer to the autonomist theory of exodus, or the Scottian theory of hidden transcripts (see below, 504-17). Similarly, Bhabha's claim that inbetweenness leads to disjuncture is problematic. In practice, people of mixed origin usually identify with one of the two terms overwhelmingly. This is usually the identity which best reflects how others see them (Tyler, 2005). And, as discussed in relation to Bhabha's politics, inbetweenness is often more typical of colonial middlemen and collaborators than of subaltern culture more broadly. The difference between transformative hybridity on the one hand, and appropriation, recuperation, commodification, or capture on the other, is difficult to specify. Hybridity can also be a hegemonic discourse. For instance, Latin American conceptions of mestizaje (mixture or 'mixedness') are implicated in hegemonic accounts of national identity which favour mestizos over indigenous and African-origin people.

Similar problems haunt Bhabha's theory of migration. Bhabha talks about listening to migrants and minorities, but few (besides himself) appear in his work. "Listening" to interview respondents in qualitative studies yields rather different conclusions from those Bhabha reaches. Very few celebrate disjuncture and anxiety. Take the following examples:

'Now hungry Ecuadoreans and Romanians arrive and make 700 Euros in ten days [compared to 2200 Euros in six days for earlier migrants] and twice as many men, but they work badly, with materials of poor quality. With this money they only pay for rent and food... And who wins? Nobody' (Marcu, 2010:728)

'I depend on my boss. I have to work only with people from my own country, and cannot understand Spanish. They pay me when they want, and I also have to work weekends... I don't know how long I'm going to be able to put up with it' (Marcu, 2010:729)

'We are all second-class citizens. We can't climb the social ladder, but what can I say, we can't get jobs with contracts... For me, the EU is just a club for the rich. They have put us in this position, simply to exploit the riches of our lands. Spain does nothing but comply with the orders from Brussels' (Marcu, 2010:730)

'For Spain we are a political strategy. When it's in their interest, they grant us a few rights, but not always. And I do not mean the middle class, who are great people, I have many friends here, but to those above them' (Marcu, 2010:730)

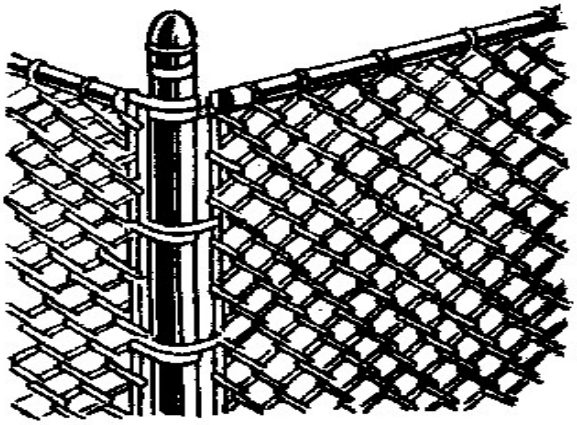
'Here, you don't feel that you're working, but that you're resting. I accompany an older lady, take her for a walk, and I can even take a nap. In my country, I can't do this. When I'm not working the land, I take care of the animals. I can't even rest on Sundays' (Marcu, 2010:731)

'I have to explain that Romania is not a land of delinquents or of prostitutes, but I can see that nobody cares what i say! Also I want to emphasise that in seven years living in Barcelona, I have not made even one Spanish friend: none' (Marcu, 2010:732)

'If there is no work here, there are no immigrants, this is clear. The moment that construction jobs disappear, for example, I am sure that a lot of undocumented people who work here will march away to other sites' (Marcu, 2010:732)

'I am a Romanian living in the UK and I must say that until now I didn't really care much about my nationality. I never did because I find it really difficult to label myself as being of a certain nationality. As far as I was always concerned I am not really Romanian or European or really any nationality because to me that just doesn't matter' (Cheregi, 2015:294)

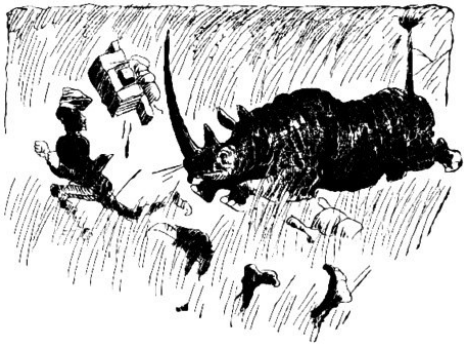
'I feel that both Romanians and Bulgarians have this "underdog" status attached to them to say the least; we got used to being told that we aren't that great. Why? I guess we had a rough political background and now we're still struggling to readjust and align ourselves to "Western" standards. I am not saying we're ages away, but we're not there yet' (Cheregi, 2015:295).



Examples can be multiplied. Johnson (2015) studies Mandinga from Guinea-Bissau resident in Portugal. She found that images of cosmopolitanism do not fit their accounts. Even if they have lived in Lisbon for thirty years, they usually cannot speak Portuguese and perceive themselves as Guinean locals, not as transnational (2015:98). Similarly, D'Alisera (2004) found a strong current of nostalgia along with disjuncture among Sierra Leoneans in the US. Genova (2017) and Fomina (2010) found that skilled Eastern European migrants distinguish themselves from 'low quality' co-nationals unable to migrate, and/or from other, lower-skilled migrants who contribute to stigma and fail to integrate. This may reflect class prejudice or stigma management. In other cases, exploitation is a major theme. Rural migrants in Chinese cities recount hyperexploitation in terms such as feeling they have sacrificed their lives (Chan et al., 2013). In Brazil, migrants outside the country disproportionately voted for the fascist candidate Bolsonaro in 2018. Those outside the country seemed particularly vulnerable to Bolsonaro's offer of simple solutions (Goodman et al., 2018). This is the opposite of what Bhabha's theory predicts.

Migrants from Asia and Africa in the Gulf countries, meanwhile, sometimes regret migrating and desire to return "home", but are unable to do so (Frantz, 2013). In some cases, countries of origin are idealised (Pande, 2013; Frantz, 2013). Other migrants send "home" misleading images and messages reflecting wealth they do not have (Gardner, 2012:45-6, 51-4). Hardly any identify with their place of residence, even those who are semi-permanent migrants with few ties to their country of origin (Ali, 2010). Scholars frequently refer to exploitative labour conditions which amount to modern slavery (Khan and Harroff-Tavel, 2011:298; Frantz, 2013:1072). Migrants tend to cluster based on nationality or even village of origin. Not only is integration largely impossible, but it is not necessarily sought (Bruslé, 2012; Weiner, 1982:7). Nonetheless, postcolonial scholars persist in celebrating migrants' "hybrid", "transnational" cultures (e.g. Isoke, 2013). When Bhabha mentions Dubai, it is simply to suggest that it is both cosmopolitan and re-

localised. Migrants 'live closer together than they would otherwise'. Hence, '[i]f you go a little bit outside cosmopolitan Dubai, you see a very different Dubai... [C]osmopolitanism of various kinds produces its own artifices of ethnic identification, its own politics of identity' (SS, 141). Economics is invisible here.



Berardi disagrees sharply with Bhabha on the effects of rootlessness and hybridity. In his work *Heroes*, which looks at massacres and suicide, he looks into the background of Seung-Hui Cho, the Virginia Tech gunman. Berardi considers Cho in the context of his wider argument that 'humans respond to today's state of permanent deterritorialization by enacting their craving for belonging through a chain of acts of murder, suicide, fanaticism, aggression, war' (Berardi, 2015:5). Looking at Cho's biography, Berardi finds evidence of an unusual kind of linguistic disassociation arising from marginality, which leaves him often unable to speak. 'He is speaking as a stranger among strangers, as a civilized person among barbarians, or (which turns out to be the same) as a barbarian among civilized persons'. Attempts to communicate are 'necessarily lost in translation' and perceived as inappropriate, and Cho reacted constantly to a 'noisy, violent, insensitive environment' where he was subject to 'trivial and aggressive energy' from others (2015:69). Although extreme, his situation is not unique or unusual. In less extreme forms, it is common among young people 'in situations of cultural and linguistic deterritorialization'. Berardi associates it, not only with neoliberal precarity and cultural marginality, but also with a situation where children learn language from computers and televisions, more than from parents (2015:69). Cho's situation is in some ways exemplary. 'The psychiatric labelling and

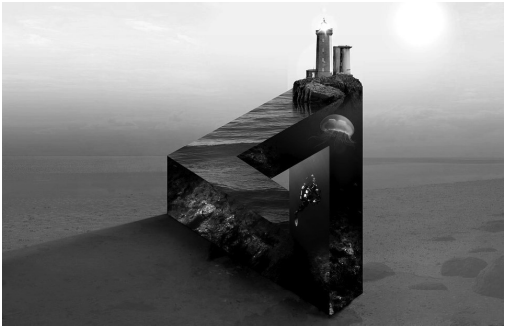
further marginalization from the group, the bullying, the humiliation, the silent rage, the desire for revenge. Cho's story is the story of millions of migrants all around the world' (2015:62). Neither the underlying suffering, nor the violent response, fit well into Bhabha's account. It seems endless inbetweenness is far less bearable than Bhabha imagines.

These examples show several things. Firstly, migrants do not speak with one voice. There is no unitary migrant perspective. Migrants can be radical, conservative, modernist, localist, angry, self-stigmatising, and many more things besides. They don't obey Bhabha's feeling rules. Secondly, many migrants are prejudiced against other migrants. Some displace stigma from themselves by stigmatising other migrants, differentiated by race or class. Thirdly, many migrants make complaints which come closer to a Marxist focus on precarity and economics than to Bhabha's view of disjunction. Indeed, economic grievances are among the most prominent themes across different sources. Some recount experiences similar to modern slavery. Several express anti-neoliberal sentiments. Others give accounts of improved conditions. Some endorse ideas of western superiority and their own inferiority. Some are nostalgic for their countries of origin. Some are unable to use Bhabhaesque inbetween strategies because they don't speak the local language. The picture is very diverse, and certainly does not suggest a general sublimation of disjuncture as a new, desirable form of identity. Migrants' accounts often resonate rather more with Marxist critics of Bhabha, such as Dirlik (1994a) and Parry (2004), than with Bhabha's idea of a translational, negotiated migrant voice.

Bhabha's emphasis on hybridity, migration and subalternity is also controversial. Huddart argues that there are problems with treating migration as the definitive postmodern experience. Firstly, not all migrants move for the same reasons. Secondly, not everyone moves at all (Huddart, 2009:57). Bhabha's examples mainly come from art and high culture, and it is not clear that actual migrants experience the effects he posits. He is talking mainly about structural functions, but it is questionable how much his approach has to say about real migrants – their motivations, identities or social practices. The depressive collapse experienced by some unrecognised refugees (Pressley, 2017; Newman, 2018), the idealisation of the west and of consumer culture, the emergence of diasporic long-distance nationalisms (Fuglerud, 1999), the cultural attachment to a desperate struggle to survive which is common among marginalised groups, the anger and vengefulness of mistreated people, the attempts to segment public and private life which often sustain minority cultures, are all rather different from Bhabha's account. In any case, the affects of migration rarely extend to the so-called 'host' society. Migrants are either subject to violence and rejection, or welcomed on the basis of economic contributions or liberal diversity. To be sure, Bhabha admits that hybridity in his technical sense does not typify the experiences of all "hybrid", migrant or minoritised people. But, if it is actually uncommon among the referent-groups, its theoretical value – and connection to postcolonial struggle – is unclear.

Edward Soja's concept of 'thirdspace' (Soja, 1996) is inspired mainly by Lefebvre, but has some similarities with Bhabha's third space. In his geographical work, Soja uses the term to refer to a way of seeing and interacting with space. It treats space as 'lived space', constantly redefined and open. Fixed meanings of space are always open to further contestation. In Soja's approach, "first space" sees simply the physical location, "second space" sees its historical origins and official function. "Thirdspace" sees also the various everyday uses and practices, and the meanings held by particular social actors. For example, a street is a place on a map, and has a main purpose of travelling between different places. But from the perspective of thirdspace, a street is also defined as home

for some people and as unsafe for others, as a site of present or past protests, an art canvas for graffiti, a place to be 'reclaimed', a site for gossip or drug dealing or street parties. Whereas Bhabha's third space is mainly abstract - existing between two identities - this wider sense of thirdspace allows a multiplication of meanings.



As we have seen, in 'Halfway House', Bhabha argues that displaced people exist in a marginal zone between categories (see above, 332). This piece suggests that only an included identity – an identity on the inside of the dominant system, however marginally – is possible according to Bhabha. The possibility of rejecting the system, of 'choosing not to belong', of defining oneself against or outside the system rather than on its margins, is closed-off. This gesture of theoretical closure follows logically from Bhabha's view that the social order is constitutive of identity (see above, 81-5). Politically, however, it is debilitating. It forces people to accept any form of incorporation, however adverse, because of the lack of an ontologically recognisable alternative. This position is especially problematic in current neoliberal conditions, in which the system uses the risk of exclusion as a constant threat. Bhabha's approach reproduces the desperation to remain included at any cost which underpins contemporary conformity. In reality, the forcible delinking (Trichur, 2003; Nederveen Pieterse, 2004) or social triage (Bey, n.d.) of entire regions and categories of people is widespread. The relative surplus population (Clover, 2016) who have no place in the dominant system are today the main constituency of revolt.

Another line of critique is that ambivalence is an imposed metaphysical concept irrelevant to the cases to which it is applied. From my point of view, there is a transcendental ontology operative in Bhabha's work, which he has adopted from Derrida (and to a lesser extent Lacan). This ontology rests on the presence of ambiguity at the root of every category and speech-act (see Chapter 2). Other critics have made similar arguments. In response to such criticisms, Bhabha denies that ambivalence is an abstract universal concept, or a transcendental concept. He says that there is something about it which precludes statements such as 'all forms of authority are always already ambivalent' or 'subjectivity is always already split' (RA, 61). Yet these claims seem to be compatible with Bhabha's broader argument. He does not explain why he rules them out. In my view, he simply disavows the transcendental aspects of his own theory. He does not admit that they exist or that they are transcendental. This is consistent with a "politics of perversion". On different lines, Han suggests that the insights of Bhabha's theory of hybridity are undermined by the concept's excessive breadth. Since everything is hybrid, it is difficult to use hybridity to understand particular historical situations (Han, 2005:6). The concept means so little that it can be applied to anything.

Critique Part 4: Explaining Racism

Bhabha has a particular, rather simplistic, account of racism. For him, all identities are founded on constitutive exclusions and self/other binaries. Ingroups or "primary terms" sustain the security of their egos by subordinating outgroups or "supplements". But primary terms are always haunted by their dependence on the other they exclude. Racism is an effect of a paranoid or controlling response to the resultant anxiety. It is thus a special, localised case of the general anxiety and neurosis resulting from the ambivalent nature of signification (see above, 310-12). This style of explanation is not unique to Bhabha. It is common in postcolonial theory, critical race theory, anti-racist activism, and some strands of Lacanian psychoanalysis and deconstruction today. Assessing the

argument is complicated by the multiple meanings of the word "racism". It is used to refer to extreme individual prejudices and discriminatory acts, to latent prejudices, and to structural inequalities which may be unintended or unconscious. Often, these different senses of the world are wilfully or clumsily conflated – so that latent prejudice seems continuous with extreme prejudice, and both of these are taken to cause or exemplify structural inequality. In reality, these phenomena may have quite different structural roots, even if they reinforce each other at the level of social assemblages.

I shall focus here on individual racism, because I discuss structural inequality later (see Chapter 8). A great many historical, sociological and psychological explanations for racism (in one or more of the different senses) have been advanced. Despite its current popularity, it is unclear how much purchase the Lacanian/Derridean reduction of racism to exclusion of an extimate supplement actually has. Other theories suggest, for example, that racism is a divide-and-rule strategy by capital (Allen, 1994), a form of scapegoating (Bauman, 2007), a displacement of suffering arising from neoliberal precarity (Appadurai, 2006), a complex arising from unmet needs (Rosenberg, 2005), or a way in which people cling to meaning on the edge of psychosis (Lachin, n.d.). A Freudian might interpret racism as a displacement of fears of a castrating authority or an abject internal desire. Hence, racists often associate outgroups with disavowed traits such as sexuality, impulsiveness, violence and so on (see Fanon, 2008/1952; Theweleit, 1987/1980). In an era where explicit racism is taboo, it can even be a type of hysterical provocation or

reactance. Social psychologists find that racism in the sense of individual prejudice can be artificially generated and increased by group conflict, and reduced by cooperation (Sherif et al, 1961; Elliott, 2003). They also find a relationship between racism and anxiety (Pedersen et al., 2018), a link to low intelligence and difficulty understanding difference (Azarian, 2016), and a strong media influence (e.g. van Dijk, 1987:201; Jacobs et al., 2017; van Klingeren et al., 2015). Racism is more extreme among people with little contact with members of other groups, who develop unrealistic stereotypes and rely on media representations (Alba et al., 2005). Psychologists have theorised intergroup conflict, social identity in conflict settings, and cognitive generalisations as possible sources of prejudice. Anthropologists also suggest that ethnocentrism may develop from mutual dependence and meaning-construction among ingroup members (Geertz, 1963). Alternatively, they suggest that politicians use ethnicity for instrumental ends (Smith, 1993). Such "instrumentalist" arguments also often arise in studies of nationalism.

I would broadly group these different approaches into three alternatives to the postcolonial view. There are false consciousness approaches, which treat racism as something which is not in the interest of most racists. It is promoted by the elite or the media to displace social conflicts from other, structurally more important antagonisms. Structural racism might serve related or distinct elite interests – for example, in maintaining dual labour markets. False consciousness approaches include Marxist

approaches, instrumentalist approaches, and some critical race approaches. Then there are alternative psychoanalytic approaches, which treat racism at the individual level as a symptom of other, personal-level factors. These are either based on non-Lacanian psychoanalytic theories (such as Reich's) or on a reading of Lacan which differs from Bhabha's. Finally, there are approaches which emphasise contexts of social interaction. Racism is due to hostile contact or absence of contact among different groups. It is undermined if people work together for common projects. Several psychological theories such as Social Identity Theory and the Geertzian "primordialist" approach operate on this model.

These three theories can be set alongside the postcolonial approach as different explanations for racism. It should be remembered when comparing the four theories that the phenomenon of racism is actually very complex. Complacent liberals, conservative racists, and angry extreme racists are libidinally and socially rather different groups. Individual prejudices may or may not have a relationship to patterns of impersonal structural discrimination. And prejudices may differ in origin as well as intensity. Sometimes one is dealing with literal, honestly held, but factually inaccurate beliefs. Sometimes one is dealing with deep, difficult psychological issues such as trauma, phobia and paranoia, which find particular expression in a racist worldview. Sometimes one is dealing with legitimate grievances which have been displaced onto the wrong target.

Bhabha processes the issue of racism using his general theoretical categories. We have seen how Bhabha tends to moralise about issues of hatred and violence, even when the perpetrators are subaltern (see above, 343-6; also c.f. below, 861-882). This seems also to manifest in his approach to racism. The general force of Bhabha's approach militates against any attempt to understand how racists think or what real grievances might contribute to racism, even if these are explored to find ways to overcome racism. If all racism is due to attempts to bolster an illusory ego by excluding others (as Bhabha maintains), there is no way to satisfy the root grievances underlying it. The grievance is simply a naïve desire for an impossible presence. What's more, extreme racists are just suffering the same general existential condition as everyone else. And the only way to solve the underlying problem is to go through subjective destitution – which most people are, predictably, too terrified to do. It is thus possible that Bhabha's approach belittles the suffering underpinning racism by turning it into a failure of self-awareness and reducing it to a general existential condition. It ignores more malleable roots of racism in economic or personal life-conditions.

Politically, Bhabha's analysis means that little can be done about racism, other than endlessly criticising and deconstructing it. Dialogue is impossible. Productive conflict is impossible. Militantly fighting racism should be avoided because it reproduces antagonism. Economic change is largely off the agenda. A racist (or even a complacent liberal) can only be faced with a stark demand to lose their ego and undergo abjection. If they refuse or are unable to do so, this is effectively treated as a personal flaw or sin. Bhabha's approach is thus a very unsympathetic and zero-sum way of framing the issue. Even when coupled with Bhabha's refusal of antagonistic politics, this way of understanding racism encourages polarisation and hatred. If, on the other hand, racism is due to some mixture of sociological and psychological mechanisms, there is more room for manoeuvre in fighting it. If racism is based on false consciousness, then it can be overcome through true consciousness or focus on the antagonism it conceals. If racism is based on the projection of unwanted desires, it makes sense to disinhibit and de-repress these desires. If it is based

on group hostility or mutual ignorance, it can be reduced through awareness, mutual cooperation, and affinity.

The differences among the perspectives can be tested in various ways. If racism arises from processes of ego-defence, as Bhabha suggests, one would expect it to be strongest among elite white men. In fact, it is more common among people with limited education (Raijman et al., 2003) and those with little knowledge about immigration (Schemer, 2010:739) or politics (Fitzgerald et al., 2012:488). If racism involves discomfort in the face of difference which disrupts one's identity, it should be most common among white people who have a lot of contact with non-white people. In fact, the opposite is the case (Lubbers et al., 1998:417; Alba et al., 2005). If individual-level racism is an effect of existential threats to white/western identity, it should increase in response to changes in the real world such as migration rates and crime rates. In fact, such real changes have little impact. Media coverage is a much stronger prediction of prejudice than real shifts (van Klingeren et al., 2015; Vergeer et al., 2000). Most studies suggest that anti-immigration prejudice is largely a result of threat-perceptions (Riek et al., 2006). At a stretch, this might suggest an ego-defence function. But the sense of threat seems to focus on deviance and economics.

Similar counter-examples are available in the political sphere. For example, there are instances where simple contact with a person from a hated group can break down extreme racism (Walker, 2016). There are also instances where racism weakens or differences among groups seem to temporarily disappear because people are struggling together against a common cause (Alkis, 2010:295; Anon., 2003:29). There are cases of racialised prison gangs fighting together during prison uprisings, and Coptic Christians protecting praying Muslims (some of them conservatives from the Muslim Brotherhood) in Tahrir Square. There are also cases, like the Battle of Cable Street, where racism has been effectively confronted by force. This is possible because extreme racism is often coupled in an assemblage with militarism, glorification of strength, and a type of enjoyment rooted in violence against abject others. Confrontation by a stronger adversary decomposes this assemblage. Racism also seems to be stronger or more explicit in periods of economic crisis, and stronger in some western countries compared to others. It rises and falls alongside particular political and media events. For example, racism in Britain largely disappeared from overt public discourse in the 1990s, only to resurface in the 2000s (Wykes, 2001). Initial preferences for Commonwealth migrants (such as Indians and Jamaicans) later turned into a preference for white migrants, but this was undermined by reactions to Eastern European migration in the 2000s (Erel et al., 2016:1343). If individual racism reflects underlying existential issues, one would expect its manifestation to be more consistent.

Another problem is that Bhabha's critique reflects back on his own approach. If Lacanian/Derridean ontology is true, then everyone's existential issues are ultimately the same - whatever their ethnicity. Members of marginalised groups are also fighting the same existential battles as racists. They also have egos founded on exclusion of the extimate Thing or supplement. They also resist the ego-decomposition (often experienced as a threat of extermination) arising from this complex. There is little evidence that they're

any more willing to humbly accept the decomposition of their identities and lifeworlds than complacent liberals or extreme racists are. Indeed, anti-racist and anti-colonial orientations might themselves be ways to create a self/other binary.

It is thus paradoxical that Bhabha thinks they can escape the trap of "inversion", or repetition of the process of excluding the supplement. The way postcolonial scholars talk about colonisers and racists often suggests that these people are actually a kind of supplement or Thing for the scholars themselves. They feel colonisers and racists to be always suffocatingly over-present, and at the same time absolutely other and threatening. And they try to defend their egos, besieged by this extimate other, through aggressive or passive-aggressive "strategies" of rejection and disruption. The binarising aspects of Bhabha's theory reinforce this ego-defensiveness. Yet it also *keeps* the colonial or racist other in constant, close proximity (hence its refusal of autonomy). And it does not eliminate the underlying aggression. 'Sometimes I scream at my children', admits Bhabha (MGM, 178). One might wish, with Fanon, that he would scream at his children less and scream at the powerful more. Or one might notice how the same underlying anger that makes him scream at his children also motivates his passive-aggressive "subversions", in spite of his disavowals.

Other Lacanians have thus made accusations that postcolonial theory does not go far enough. Postcolonial theory demands ego-decomposition from white racists and liberals, but not from marginalised people. It simply replaces one kind of primary/supplemental relation with another. This makes a certain amount of strategic sense, because (elite) white racists and liberals possess a lot more power than marginalised people. Decomposing their egos should therefore undermine social power to a greater extent than decomposing others' egos. But ultimately, this process seems to redistribute power rather than destroy it. An upwardly mobile postcolonial elite takes over the position at the centre of power while claiming not to have done so. And they do this by preserving their own egos from a decomposition aimed exclusively at *modern western* subjects. This is not my position, as I do

not share Lacanian/Derridean ontology. But critiques of this kind are articulated by people like Žižek (2002) and Badiou (2009).

Bhabha's entire theoretical edifice rests on a gamble that people can become reflexive, non-egoistic creatures who accept constitutive ambiguity. There are thus many possible worlds where it is rendered irrelevant. What if the process theorists like Bhabha want is impossible in general? Or what if it is possible only for a minority, or only after years of expensive psychotherapy? Are Lacanians and Derrideans doomed to be small holier-than-thou sects, looking down on the racism and other identity-sins of the mere mortals who have fallen short of their higher awareness? Worse, are they doomed to be ego-defensive people passing themselves off as having a higher awareness they simultaneously admit to be unachievable? Is the impossibility of their vision indicated by their own recourse to strong binaries, unquestionable background assumptions, and reductive dismissals of critiques? It is also noticeable that Bhabha's 'misfits' (DH, n.p.) do not seem to include eccentrics, drop-outs or psychotics. They are very much 'misfits' who are *inside* society.

The situation is still worsened if – like Bhabha – they celebrate neoliberal precarity as providing the conditions for higher awareness. If they justify disjuncture arising from neoliberalism, they end up siding with the powerful, and the cybernetic relational worldview they promote (see Invisible Committee, 2015), against the people dispossessed by neoliberalism. The victims of neoliberalism are blamed for reacting against precarity and thus refusing its educational force. This repeats the New Right gesture of blaming the victims of neoliberalism for being unfit or unprepared for the new global market conditions (see below, 666). Yet it sells this repetition as anti-racist, anti-colonial, and left-wing. Is this part of the reason why resistance to neoliberalism is taking increasingly reactionary forms – not only in the west, but also in India, Africa, Eastern Europe, and elsewhere?

In my view, Bhabha takes the wrong gamble. He stakes his entire theory on something which probably will not work. The demand for self-change on a Lacanian/Derridean model is extreme and unlikely. It makes change so difficult as to be nearly impossible. The change demanded requires each person's self-destruction. Each person resists change to preserve themselves from decomposition. Each person's resistance to change creates conditions of abjection for others. The result is something like a Hobbesian war of all against all. The only way out of this grimdark world is for everyone to adopt a Derridean/Lacanian ontology and accept the pervasiveness of lack. This positing of an entire worldview as the solution to a whole series of social problems is structurally similar to the view that social problems would be solved if everyone became Marxist, or born-again Christian, or Muslim. It is reminiscent, for example, of temperance movements in the era of the industrial revolution, which sought moral reform as a path to overcome poverty. But it is even less likely to succeed, because at least Marxism and religion offer libidinal "hooks" to attract adherents. Bhabha can only offer personal decomposition and experiences of anxiety, melancholy, and endless trauma. All of this, however depressing,

would make sense as a strategy if the underlying analysis of social problems was well-founded. But much of it is based on assertion or faith. The political consequences of the worldview Bhabha endorses are discussed in more detail later in the book (Chapters 11-15). For now, suffice to say that Bhabha has not effectively established either that hybridity is subversive, or that racism is caused by textual/psychoanalytic mechanisms. Without clearer support for these claims, his edifice, however beautiful, is built on sand.

CHAPTER 7

Colonialism, Anti-Colonialism and Postcolonialism

Colonialism is Bhabha's favourite topic of discussion. Many of his writings focus on the history of colonialism, especially in his native India. These accounts treat colonialism as an example of the functioning of the signifier. Like any system of signs, colonialism is haunted by ambiguity. This allows it to be subverted or disrupted by subaltern (colonised) groups. In historical colonies, such groups used the ambiguities in colonial discourse to carve out in-between or border spaces which disrupted colonial power. Bhabha implies that this is ultimately what brought about decolonisation. Furthermore, it will also work against the forms of colonialism which persist today (i.e. against global racialised power distributions). His account is counterposed to analyses which suggest that colonialism was overthrown by social movements, either violently (as in Algeria) or through passive resistance (as in India). Such antagonistic approaches, according to Bhabha, entrench colonial binaries of "us and them". Rather, according to Bhabha it was everyday practices of mimicry and hybridity which subverted colonialism and caused it to collapse.

The history Bhabha discusses is relatively recent. Political colonialism ended in India in 1947, and in Africa in the 1960s. Depending on which countries or regions one counts as colonies, the process of decolonisation is arguably unfinished. Some postcolonial scholars consider countries like America, Australia and Israel to be settler-colonies. Some consider regions such as the West Bank, Tibet, Kashmir and Kurdistan to be colonies or subcolonies. And there are even a few remaining "external dependencies" of western powers, such as French Guiana, Puerto Rico, Diego Garcia, and the Falklands/Malvinas Islands (which Britain fought a war to keep in 1982). Some of the remaining dependencies are tax havens or settler-colonies where most people want to remain part of the "empire". Others have significant independence movements.

The term "decolonisation" is also now used in a wider, metaphorical or expanded sense. Any challenge to North-South or white-black hierarchies is taken to be "decolonisation". Hence, one can find works dealing with the decolonisation of education, methodology, medicine, social work, the literary canon, and so on. Political decolonisation is usually attributed to anti-colonial movements as well as the weakness of European power after World War 2 and the high cost of maintaining and developing colonies. Anti-colonial revolutionaries often sought to achieve socialist, humanist or nationalist revolutions or revivals. Once colonisers were removed, the colonised country would rise and flourish. This powerful vision inspired movements across the world, which made it difficult for colonial powers to control their colonies.

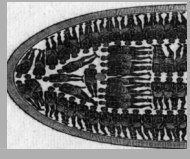
This process succeeded in bringing about widespread decolonisation. In other ways, though, the anti-colonial revolutions were ultimately *unsuccessful* revolutions. Most ended in pacted transitions which installed postcolonial governments sympathetic to the imperialist powers. Only a handful of governments were directly overthrown. Governments were formed by local ex-colonial bureaucrats, ex-colonial army leaders, or local political clients of the colonisers. Economic and cultural imperialism carried on as before. Where revolutions succeeded, they usually reverted to colonial forms of power later on. Countries like Algeria and Mozambique have ended up entrapped in the neocolonialism of the IMF and World Bank. In India, the British empire withdrew under pressure from the rising superpowers and its own damaged finances. It handed over power to a British-educated elite who had carefully restrained the radicalism of the pro-independence struggle. In using unsuccessful revolutions as a model, it is unsurprising that Bhabha ends up privileging strategies which are largely those of the intermediary elite.

In the Margins: Colonialism and Decolonisation

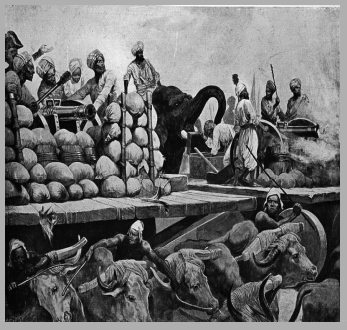
Before modernity, there were overlapping regimes of political power in each part of the world. People tended to identify with cultures, civilisations, or kinship/lineage structures, even in hierarchical empires like China, India and Rome. Europe was no more powerful than other regions. For much of the Middle Ages, Europe was a backwater in the shadows of the Islamic world. Empires had existed in earlier periods, and people rarely felt a strong attachment to particular political boundaries. Powerful states might invade neighbours and rivals, or demand payments of tribute. It was quite common for areas to be ruled by a dynasty from outside the area, or as part of an empire ruled from far away. Conquest, the suppression of rebellions, and especially wars of religion or against "barbarians" from another culture could be extremely brutal. Atrocities such as massacres, rape, and enslavement sometimes happened. But ancient empires rarely penetrated far into everyday life – unlike modern colonisers. Peasant life usually carried on as normal. Invading dynasties were often absorbed into existing social structures. The Chinese emperor had different titles and powers in different parts of the empire. The Mongols who overran most of Asia in the thirteenth century started out as hostile invaders. However, they quickly adapted to the wealth and power of the countries they invaded. This pattern was so common in the Islamic world that Ibn Khaldun actually considered it to be a law of political science: virile nomadic desert peoples create empires through conquest, become decadent due to wealth, and are overthrown by the next wave of nomadic invaders. When Europeans began building empires, local elites and populations often expected them to become just another new elite which would be incorporated into the existing structure.

In reality, modern colonisation was very different. From the sixteenth century, Europeans began conquering overseas territories in North and South America and the South Pacific. Some territories were overrun and settled by Europeans, as a way to defuse discontent within Europe by "exporting" the "relative surplus population". Indigenous groups were almost wiped out – sometimes over 90% of the population were killed. In many cases this was deliberate genocide. Survivors would often be held in dependent conditions in reservations composed of the least useful land, and governments would attempt to stamp out their culture in brutal ways. Elsewhere, conditions were unsuitable for European settlement, because of tropical diseases, large populations, and/or entrenched local rulers. Trading posts were set up around the coasts of India, Southeast Asia and Africa.

These posts were staffed by European merchants and soldiers, some of whom were under the control of chartered trading companies. These were specialist companies given a monopoly on trade in particular regions by the King, Queen or state. The companies had their own armies and navies, legislative systems, and other trappings of state power. They were rarely accountable to local rulers and had fortifications which could repel attacks. In Africa, European traders would also capture or buy slaves, who were transported to the Americas to work in harsh conditions on plantations. As well as the massive human suffering caused to slaves, the slave trade decimated African populations and caused wars among local groups. Similar patterns of forced trading were imposed on China in the nineteenth century.



Information flows and cross-cultural knowledge were extremely basic in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. For instance, it often took six months for messages to pass from the East India Company leaders in Britain to its agents on the ground in India. There were often big differences in perspective between company leaders, politicians in the home country, and power-holders on the ground. European states and companies often found themselves faced with *faits accompli* as local actors created new realities on the ground. European merchants and military adventurers could often make big fortunes quickly in the colonies, at the cost of taking risks.



Over time, Europeans captured more and more of the surplus wealth of the countries where they were trading. For example, the East India Company was able to capture the tax revenues of Bengal and obtain the ability to give tax-free status to Indian traders elsewhere. They effectively usurped the tax income of the Indian state. In many areas, the impact of European trading subtly undermined existing forms of power. The worldviews which had until then made sense of social life were often severely disrupted. For example, beliefs that the Chinese Emperor had a mandate from heaven to rule the entire world on behalf of the single (Chinese) civilisation could not survive military defeat to the imperialists in the nineteenth century.

As European nation-states became more established in the nineteenth century, the state usually took control of existing colonies from the chartered companies and other irregular actors. They also began to seek new colonies. Always controversial in Britain, the role of the East India Company was thrown into question after the Indian Rebellion of 1857 (referred to by Bhabha using its older name, the 'Indian Mutiny').

The British state took direct control of India in 1858. The Scramble for Africa (1881-1914) saw European states carve up the map of Africa into different spheres of influence and then systematically conquer or subdue 'their' areas. The Industrial Revolution in Europe led to technological advantages, such as gunships and machine guns. These advantages gave

European states the power to conquer other parts of the world by the mid-nineteenth century. These advantages were actually relatively short-lived. 100 years later, the gap had closed enough that European powers routinely lost colonial wars. (The west is today trying to recreate such an advantage through high-tech weapons and information systems. The invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq are arguably part of a politcal/military recolonisation process). Once in power, imperial governments were often divided on whether to encourage the persistence of 'traditional' ideas and structures, or whether to encourage 'modernisation' and imitation of Europe.

Once they had territorial control, colonisers frequently restructured local economies to export primary commodities so as to support European industries. Primary or low-value-added commodities are products of nature and human labour which only require a limited amount of unskilled labour input – such as food and other agricultural products, mined ores and metals, and timber. (Nowadays, low-skilled industries and services are also considered low-value-added). The value added is "low" in terms of market exchange, not necessarily in terms of use. Primary commodities are necessary for modern industry to function. But the profits usually go to the people and companies which put in more specialised labour or larger investments later in the industrial process. For example, India on the eve of

colonisation had a strong textile industry based on small-scale handicraft, and actually exported textiles to Europe. Britain suppressed the textile industry because it was a competitor which threatened British exports of similar goods. India was instead encouraged to produce primary commodities like tea and jute. Colonisers might

sometimes have stimulated economic growth in the colonies – which might be a good or bad thing, depending how one feels about capitalism. But the growth was nearly always focused in a few major primary commodity sectors. The country's entire infrastructure, including its state structure, was geared around producing and exporting these goods while controlling instability. This pattern has persisted to some degree in postcolonial countries. India and China are now major exporters of manufactured goods, but mainly to European markets, with profits going to European companies. Countries like Nigeria and Zambia continue to export mainly primary goods.

There is academic controversy over the importance of colonialism to European economies. Some writers maintain that the economic and technological revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth century are primarily effects of European plunder elsewhere in the world. Others maintain that colonialism was costly rather than profitable. Governments often had to spend money occupying colonies and putting down rebellions. The resultant benefits from trade were lower than the cost. However, the figures might be unreliable because raw materials are underpriced. The slave trade and the associated textile industries were also very profitable for businesses. In the nineteenth century, European powers were engaged in intense geopolitical competition. Each would 'scramble' for colonial power

to stay ahead of its rivals. In the sixteenth century, colonisation was also motivated partly by competition between Europe and the Islamic world.

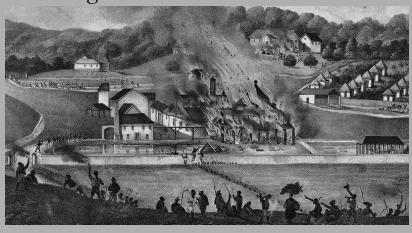
Among those unconvinced about economic motives, a range of theories have been advanced. Some writers emphasise the prestige which aristocratic rulers could obtain from conquest. Some emphasise the influence of prejudiced views of non-European cultures. Some suggest that colonies provided a safe outlet for "surplus populations" within Europe. Junior members of aristocratic and merchant families could live like lords in the colonies, make their fortunes or die trying. Unemployed workers and landless farmers could move to the new colonial frontier. (Britain actually deported convicts to America and Australia for this reason). Others see the process as almost accidental. Opportunists on the ground built up personal fortunes and empires, and the state was called in later to clean up the mess they made. There was also pressure from religious movements to send out missionaries.

The number of Europeans in most nineteenth-century colonies was small, and primarily consisted of military officers, plus some bureaucrats and traders. The bulk of the army and the local administration was made up of colonised peoples, either from the territory itself or from elsewhere in the empire. Existing rulers were often co-opted into systems of 'indirect rule'. They were allowed to keep nominal power as long as they obeyed colonial orders. Colonial powers exploited divisions within colonies. They favoured certain groups so as to buy their cooperation in suppressing other groups. Soldiers, traders and workers from outside a territory were often used to do the colonial power's dirty work. In 1920, Indian soldiers were deployed to put down a revolt in British-occupied Iraq. In Uganda, British power-holders allied with the monarch of the large Bugandan kingdom against other states and peoples, hired Acholi mainly as soldiers, and brought in Sudanese troops

who were notorious for committing atrocities. Indian merchants were also used as middlemen in East Africa, to deflect anger from the colonial rulers. But however much complexity was encouraged, the colonial social order rested on a racial/national hierarchy with white Europeans at the top.

Colonialism was very frequently resisted. The Scramble for Africa was accomplished with a great many wars against existing states and indigenous peoples. East India Company rule was expanded by a series of wars, first in Bengal and Bihar, then against Mysore and the Maratha. China was turned into a semi-colony after the Opium Wars. America fought a series of 'Indian Wars' against Native Americans as it expanded westward across the plains. These included a new wave of massacres and genocidal practices. Once established, colonial rule was rarely stable. It was rocked by periodic peasant rebellions, armed insurgencies, and 'mutinies' by its own (mainly non-European) armies. However, there were often also sections of the local elite who collaborated or compromised with the colonisers – either because they saw no alternative, or because they could gain local advantages from the patronage of this new power-holder.

To maintain control, colonial powers developed brutal forms of warfare, which underpin today's counterinsurgency methods and "public order" policing. Atrocities were common. For example, British forces in India often opened fire on crowds, and people suspected of taking part in rebellions were executed in gruesome ways. In one famous incident – the Amritsar or Jallianwala Bagh Massacre of 1919 – British troops trapped protesters in a closed space and opened fire, killing hundreds. In Namibia, tens of thousands of Herero and other Africans died in concentration camps as German forces tried to put down resistance. In 1865, black Jamaicans rebelled against British rule. In retaliation, British soldiers killed hundreds of people (including known dissidents) and burned thousands of houses. In the Belgian Congo – now the Democratic Republic of Congo – violent methods were used to coerce people into forced labour on rubber plantations. Work refusers were often killed, and managers would cut off workers' hands as a punishment.

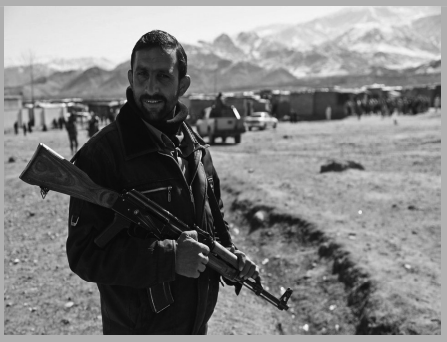


The colonial system also created a hybrid 'native' elite, known in French as *évolués* – literally, evolved or developed people. The *évolués* were people from colonised societies who had usually been educated in the European colonial metropole, adopted European ideas and habits through assimilation or education, spoke European languages, and had middle-class jobs, sometimes in the colonial state. The *évolués* are the main example of Bhabha's 'mimic men', who copied and yet subtly reinflected colonial culture. They imported European ideas such as nationalism and socialism into Asia and Africa. Colonisers encouraged the formation of this group to act as intermediaries. But some *évolués* became leaders of independence movements. Most anti-

colonial movements in the twentieth century were led by *évolués* and inspired by the European ideologies of nationalism and socialism. This middle-class group gave a new kind of leadership to the resistance which periodically recurred among peasants and workers. It focused discontent on an aspiration for independence as a modern nation-state (although some visions, such as Gandhi's, were distinct from this model). Anti-colonial *évolués* were empowered by colonial institutions set up to 'civilise' non-European peoples, such as parliaments in colonial countries. Some historians believe that colonial powers deliberately created this elite so they could withdraw from the colonies, which were becoming too costly to maintain.

Decolonisation usually refers to the collapse of European empires after World War 2. But independence movements had already been successful in Latin America in the early nineteenth century, and in European countries such as Poland and Ireland in the early twentieth century. A lot of the first European colonies were already independent by 1900. The countries which successfully decolonised after World War 2 were mostly those which were colonised more recently. The process started early in India, where massive civil disobedience actions were organised by the Indian National Congress, and smaller groups engaged in armed insurgency. Gandhi sought a type of self-determination which included spiritual and ecological elements, and a revival of low-tech household crafts. But other Congress leaders sought modernisation on a western model. The British government was finally forced to concede independence after World War 2. Its finances and military resources had been drained by the war. The defeat of European powers by the Japanese in the early days of the war in Asia destroyed the illusion of invulnerability. In countries like Indonesia (Dutch East Indies) and Vietnam (part of French Indochina), nationalist movements which had

resisted the Japanese seized power on the ground before colonial armies could return to the territory. Independence for other Asian and Middle Eastern colonies soon followed. The Chinese Communists took power in 1949, curtailing western influence in China. Protests also began in African countries such as Ghana.



In 1956, Britain, France and Israel invaded Egypt during the 'Suez Crisis', in a dispute over revenues from the strategically important Suez Canal. France and Britain were forced to withdraw by a combination of American economic pressure and Soviet military threats. Britain also fought dirty wars against the Mau Mau insurgency in Kenya, communist rebels in Malaya, and rebels in Cyprus and Aden. Atrocities including forced displacement, concentration camps and torture were common. France tried to hold on for longer, fighting an eight-year war (1946-1954) to retake Indochina from the nationalist/communist Viet Minh, followed by another eight-year war (1954-1962) against an armed insurgency in Algeria. Torture and atrocities were notable features of these colonial wars, leading to controversy in European countries sensitised to human rights issues by the Nazi atrocities. France ultimately lost these wars of attrition.

By the late 1950s, Britain and France were preparing most of their remaining African colonies for independence – mostly in the years 1960-68. Portugal, then under a military dictatorship, tried to fight on in its five African territories until 1975. The costly colonial wars were one factor in the revolution which overthrew the Portuguese regime in 1974. Struggles against

white apartheid regimes in South Africa and Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) continued somewhat later. A few conflicts of this era, such as those in Palestine and Puerto Rico, are still unresolved.

The causes of decolonisation are debated. Nationalist movements undoubtedly played a huge role in decolonisation. Even where colonisers withdrew voluntarily, the threat of insurgency was often in the back of their minds. When colonial powers tried to hold onto colonies, radical factions – either communist or anti-western nationalist – often took the main role in opposition movements. These movements turned into armed insurgencies which eventually drove out the colonial power and established regimes hostile to the west. As a result, there was a common strategy among western powers of handing power over to liberal or conservative groups in the colonised societies, so as to prevent an escalation to armed insurgency and reduce the risk of communist or anti-western rulers taking power. This approach was also connected to strategies to retain an informal empire, in which colonies won political independence, but remained under economic control. In many former French colonies, such as Chad and the Central African Republic, a strong patronage system was set up between the French government and autocratic post-independence rulers kept in power by the French military. Local currencies were pegged to the French franc and preferential trade with France (and later, the EU) continued. The steam was effectively taken out of the nationalist movement in these countries, but a lot of the colonial structure was kept intact. In the Middle East, western powers supported conservative monarchies and Islamic politics as counterpoints to Arab nationalism and socialism. This was to prove costly as countries like Egypt and Iraq left the western orbit, and later, as movements based on political Islam became serious opponents of the west.

There had also been changes in the global balance of power. European nation-states had been weakened by World War 2. Many had run up debts to their own colonies. Colonising states had also realised that stability and profit in the colonies required massive investments in 'development', which they did not wish to make. Many colonies were more expensive to maintain than the profits they provided, and expectations of future benefits proved unfounded. America and the Soviet Union had emerged as the major global powers. Both of these powers were officially anti-colonial, and the Soviets (and Chinese) gave some support to anti-colonial movements. However, both superpowers ended up fighting and losing colonial wars of their own, in Vietnam and Afghanistan respectively.

The legacy of World War 2 and the rise of institutions like the United Nations led to intensified ethical criticisms of colonialism. Inside countries like Britain and France, the older conservative nationalist ideology lost some of its popularity. In Britain, the Labour Party had a more progressive stance than earlier ruling parties, and the public seemed apathetic about colonialism. Some scholars believe that moves meant to defuse unrest in the colonies (such as development projects and democratisation) actually strengthened nationalism. Others suggest that the global empire model had passed its economic peak, and European powers were orienting towards European integration instead.

Most former colonies remained initially within relationships termed 'neo-colonial' by some scholars. They exported primary commodities mainly to former imperial powers, and imported manufactured goods. In the Fordist period (for instance, in Latin America in the 1950s/60s), many countries continued to trade mainly with a single imperial power, mainly a single commodity, mainly produced through hyper-exploitative methods. Some

of the old neo-colonial structures, such as Latin America's massive export-oriented plantations (*latifundia*), entered into crisis in the 1970s and are no longer as prevalent today. Most countries have diversified from relying on a single export commodity. However, production for export often remains disconnected from the wider society. Many people in former colonies work in subsistence agriculture or the informal sector, which have little relationship to the global economy (except sometimes in terms of circulation of goods). Workers in formal and informal export industries are often paid less than the cost of reproducing their labour, because they can rely on other sectors of the economy to meet these costs.

By the 1980s, most former colonies had run up massive debts to western governments and international financial institutions. They had become dependent on loans and aid for the functioning of the economy and the incomes of the ruling elite. Western creditors began demanding Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) as conditions for further loans. SAPs impose a new kind of neo-colonialism. Governments are often forced to cut back welfare services and labour rights, reduce subsidies and state intervention in the economy, open their markets to imports (including subsidised western goods), and promote foreign investment by giving breaks to multinational companies. From the 1990s, these conditions were often accompanied by other criteria (known as "conditionalities") about such issues as gender equality, democratisation, human rights and environmental protection, although economic conditions remain the most important. The rationale for this model is "comparative advantage" – the idea that people will be better-off if everyone specialises in doing the things they're best at, or least-worst at. But the colonial legacy means that most former colonies are best at producing primary commodities for export to former imperial powers. Without interventions to alter these patterns, free trade simply perpetuates

colonial patterns. Structural adjustment has led to deindustrialisation and renewed dependency based on primary commodity exports in many African and Latin American countries, even if export destinations have diversified. The main exceptions are countries (such as China) which successfully resisted implementing SAPs.

After independence, former colonies tended to band together in the Non-Aligned Movement, which promoted a common 'Third World' agenda. At one stage, they called for a New International Economic Order. This challenge to global power has weakened today, because 'Third World' interests have diverged. Some countries – arguably including China and India, as well as East Asian countries like South Korea and Singapore – have managed to break out of colonial patterns and develop towards a more western kind of economy. However, this has generally happened on the back of earlier state intervention to promote industry, or support from established powers. Other countries, like Saudi Arabia, have got rich because of high prices for certain primary commodities, especially oil. But in other countries (such as Nigeria), similar export patterns have led to impoverishment. The 'controlling heights' of the global economy are no longer those of industry. Rather, monopoly 'super-profits' come to countries which host the command-and-control functions of the world economy, possess monopolies in technology or knowledge, or offer high-end financial services. These new 'controlling heights' remain firmly in the hands of the former colonisers (see Taylor et al., 2004).

Decolonisation is often seen as an unfinished process. The current world order continues, in general terms, to reproduce the hierarchies established in the colonial period. Global economics is stilted towards the west. Exploitative, destructive practices by western companies in former colonies are often the focus of anti-neoliberal campaigns. Some critics see development and modernisation as forms of colonialism, because they try

to bring non-western societies in line with western models. Others see some degree of modernisation as desirable, but argue that it is prevented by the global distribution of economic power. The idea that authoritarian "developmental states" can effectively impose economic development has become popular. America and various European powers continue to wage

wars in postcolonial countries, often deploying colonial counterinsurgency methods and colonial ways of thinking. Some of these practices and ideas have been 're-imported' to former imperial powers, for use against civilian unrest and particularly against the migrant and minority populations which have grown in the post-war period.

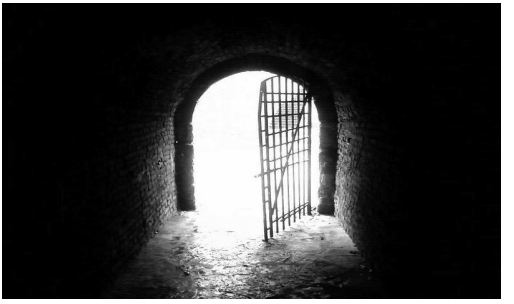
The old colonial powers still retain a few territorial colonies. Some of these are wealthy tax havens or settler colonies which don't want independence. In others – such as Puerto Rico and French Polynesia – there are lively independence movements. Supporters of the Palestinian liberation struggle against the Israeli state often see the treatment of Palestinians as colonial. The patterns of dispossession, massacre, forced displacement, and confinement into smaller and smaller reservations mirror the treatment of Native Americans and black South Africans in the colonial period. The debate on this topic is sharply polarised, because a view of Israel as a settler-colony implicitly questions its very existence. Separatist movements in formerly colonised countries also often consider their national group to be an internal colony. Examples of areas labelled this way include Mindanao, Manipur, Chechnya, Kashmir, Tibet, Xinjiang, West Papua, Western Sahara, Kurdistan, and Ambazonia.

Settler colonies, such as America, Canada and Australia, have not been decolonised, although rights-claims by indigenous groups were recognised to some degree from the 1960s/70s onwards. Decolonisation – and the spin-off adjective 'decolonial' – are widely used as buzzwords in these countries, but their meanings are often unclear. Sometimes they mean 'sovereignty' – independence or internal self-government – for indigenous groups. Sometimes they mean symbolic recognition by white and other non-indigenous people of a status as migrants or guests on indigenous land. Sometimes they mean cultural respect, or increased representation for non-European peoples, or various egalitarian or non-western approaches to economics, education, 'justice' and so on. Sometimes they refer to the rearrangement of social arrangements (course content, legal rights, etc) to weaken or dismantle racist or colonial hierarchies. The big differences between settler colonies and other former colonies is that settler colonies are entirely absorbed into the colonial society, and descendants of settlers form the majority of the population. Simply removing foreign rulers is not an option, and the removal of "settlers" is less viable than in a case like Algeria.

Ambivalence and the Colonial Text

For Bhabha, resistance to colonialism does not work because it posits an antagonism between coloniser and colonised. Rather, it works by subverting the ways in which colonialism creates meaning. It breaks down the fixity of colonial categories through ambiguity. Bhabha has been described as exploiting 'moments of ambivalence, anxiety and slippage' in colonial power and knowledge, so as to go beyond oppositions such as European/native and coloniser/colonised (RA, 59). According to Xie, Bhabha salvages a 'counterhegemonic' (oppositional, resisting) potential from the 'indeterminacy of the sign'

(1996:156). In other words, because signs are ambivalent, they can be used to subvert power (see above, 55, and below, 460-3). According to Bhabha, the colonial subject (i.e. the colonised person) does not identify with either coloniser or colonised. Instead, they identify with the inbetween zone, between the two terms. Colonial discourse functions on the language model (see above, 81-5). It is constructed through ambivalence. This leads to possibilities for unpicking, relinking, insurgence, escape from sameness, and so on (LC, 185). To resist colonialism, one needs to think from a position within the zone of ambiguity and contingency (LC, 186). The moment of enunciation, with its constitutive ambiguity, is a moment of emancipation from the closure of binary discourses (LC, 185).



Bhabha is seen by scholars as conceptualising the ways in which colonised peoples resist colonial power. Colonial power is never as secure as it seems (Huddart, 2006:1). It always depends on signs, and signs are always ambiguous. This gives colonised people the means to resist. Bhabha treats colonialism as a text, in the Derridean sense. A text, here, does not just mean a written book. It can refer to any assemblage of signs and meanings (see above, 99-100). It is a truism of poststructuralism that texts cannot be controlled by their authors. Texts contain multiple meanings which rely on the wider linguistic structure. These meanings can be reconfigured and redeployed by readers and interpreters. For example, it might seem that Shakespeare is producing meaning by writing Hamlet. But in fact he relies on readers to make sense of Hamlet through their existing understandings of the meanings of ghosts, kings, madness, love, the words "to be", and so on (see above, 81-2). The play has a different meaning for different readers who have different

understandings of these key ideas, or even of individual words. There are studies (e.g. Ang, 1985; Morley, 1980; Michaels, 2002) which show that cultures affect the meanings of popular media "texts" such as *Dallas* or *Rocky*. People from an Arab society which does not expect to see unmarried relationships might interpret a relationship in *Dallas* as one of kinship, rather than romance. People in an Aboriginal society which emphasises situated social identities rather than individual performance see in *Rocky* a story about social obligation.

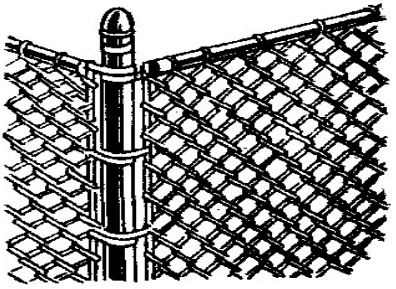
Bhabha treats colonialism as a text in this sense. It involves a set of claims and meanings which the authors – the colonisers – cannot control. The colonised can adapt and negotiate these claims (Huddart, 2006:2). Indeed, for Bhabha, colonialism is a privileged site of textuality, whereas the coloniser's society is focused on voice (LC, 93-4). Colonies subvert the illusory self-presence of the modern voice according to Bhabha, much as writing subverts voice in Derrida's analysis. Just as a colonised person might creatively "misread" *Dallas* or *Rocky* in line with their culture, so they can reinflect the ideas which underpin colonial power. The slippage of the signifier is thus vital to resistance. Bhabha takes a psychoanalytic approach to power. In Freudian/Lacanian theory, discourses are seen as contingent solutions to underlying problems. Discourse is productive, shifting the configuration of problems (Huddart, 2006:27). A psychoanalytic approach maintains that power only seems to be successful (Huddart, 2006:3). The coloniser never gets what s/he wants – which is a clear boundary between coloniser and colonised (2006:4). Monolithic structures are always in fact haunted by fissures arising from their formation. However, at times, Bhabha disavows this derivation of politics from psychoanalysis. 'Secondarization or dependence in Lacan and dependence in the political sense of colonization should not be seen as analogical' (MGM, 162). But if not, then why does Bhabha consistently analyse the latter in terms of the former?

Crucially, the psychoanalytic model means that power has fissures. These fissures create opportunities for strategies of resistance. In Bhabha's reading, history is textual. There is no general 'master narrative' or big overall story which provides a background for specific historical events. Each event emerges from a historically situated subject, in a particular context (LC, 42-3). Bhabha rejects a politics of direct opposition to subjection (see above, 212-19). Instead, he advocates subversion only from within dominant discourses (Kapoor, 2003). He sees the dominant discourse as a situation of negotiation. It might seem one-way, but in fact, it always involves bottom-up agency and mutual complicity. Bhabha sees this negotiated nature of language as constitutive. In other words, he does not allow any possibility that particular material or discursive situations alter people's capacities for negotiation or semiotic subterfuge from within the system.

The ambiguities of meaning produce effects in the field of affect (or emotion). Colonialism articulates forces at the level of discourse with those at the level of affect or the body (LC, 67). Bhabha associates colonialism with the ego's self-assertion and a sense of the self as good and innocent. These types of belief are almost taboo in his theory. Colonial desire includes pride or a sense of power in extensive possessions (LC, 97). Colonisers thus feel positive, self-affirming emotions. However, this sense of power leads to a double complex of narcissism and paranoia. The coloniser is narcissistically proud to rule, but paranoid through being unable to justify the colonial presence, and consequently afraid of the colonised (LC, 100). Paranoia involves a frustrated desire to be loved by the other person. The refusal of such love turns into hatred for the other person which is then projected in the form, “he hates me” (LC, 100).

Bhabha writes as if colonialism has a *single* psychological organising structure which operates on a collective level. For instance, he refers to 'the originary myth of colonial power' (LC, 115) and 'the desire of colonial power' (LC, 116), as if the entire structure is grounded on a single discursive moment. Bhabha analyses colonial politics largely as such an interplay of narcissism and paranoia, brought about by ambivalence and textual subversion. He also associates the colonial text with rational knowledge. Colonialism does not only require objectivism, the 'right of everything to be a noun'. It also relies on a form of authoritative subjectivity which creates the discourse of objectivity (LC, 233). Yet its authority is insecure. Paranoia imagines an aggressivity prior to colonial power itself. The colonised other does not give the love which the coloniser seeks. They are kept down by force. And they are feared as a chaotic force waiting to burst loose (LC, 100-1).

For example, according to Bhabha, the anti-colonial revolts discussed by Guha (1997) are irreducibly ambivalent between sectarian strife and militant revolt (LC, 187). This seems a dubious reading. Guha studied peasant revolts in colonial India, emphasising themes such as inversion and profanation. Because of a lack of peasant sources, he tried to reconstruct these revolts from the colonial record. Guha approached the revolts from a Marxist point of view. He found that they fall somewhere inbetween the expected class politics and a religious or sectarian type of conflict. But this binary arises from Guha's expectation of class-based revolt. Colonial-era peasants did not know that their actions would later be interpreted by a neo-Marxist like Guha, and so could not have created ambiguity from this point of view, either deliberately or unconsciously. The ambiguity between sectarianism and militancy is really constructed by the neo-Marxist's historical gaze, which does not expect to find the two together. This combination may not have been ambiguous to the peasant rebels themselves.



Colonialism is an unusual power-apparatus. It rests on the simultaneous recognition and disavowal of difference (LC, 70). *Disavowal* (see nosubject, n.d.) is a psychoanalytic term for a refusal to recognise or admit a traumatic perception. A person who disavows something simply refuses to see it, or admit that they have seen it. It usually entails simultaneously knowing and denying. Discourse is split, with one aspect relating to reality and the other refusing it. This has effects in colonial discourse. Colonialism 'speaks in a tongue that is forked, not false' (LC, 85). The doubling of colonial identity reflects a tension between a 'synchronic' (fixed-viewpoint, eternal) view of time, and the reality of historical change (LC, 86). Colonialism has to use disavowal because it makes two contradictory claims. On the one hand, it can't tolerate dark zones on the map. It wants to authoritatively represent otherness. But its right to represent is based on the other's being radically different. And something which is radically different is unrepresentable (LC, 111). Hence, colonialism has to treat colonised peoples as both representable and unrepresentable. Colonialism requires that others be unitary and representable within its monological discourse (LC, 115). But at the same time, it precludes this. The impossibility of naming difference operates to alienate 'colonialist cultural ideas of progress, piety, rationality and order' at the very point of their imposition (LC, 129). Colonial ways of talking about history are split down the middle. Sometimes colonialists talk in an evolutionary manner about societies developing towards modernity, sometimes in strict dichotomies between superior and inferior societies (LC, 130). It can't decide whether the colonised are less-developed versions of colonisers, or are inherently inferior. It is torn between the two positions – and this ultimately tears it apart.

A similar contradiction arises between European discourse and its local performance. Colonial power exists somewhere between a myth of origins, involving a European example and its application, and a historical process of speech or politics, in which European practices are displaced and changed (LC, 105). It expresses itself in a feeling that ideas are somehow degraded in the act of applying them in practice. This feeling arises because installing the 'word' or idea in the wilderness of the colony is a form of displacement and dislocation (LC, 104-5). It is not just that colonised cultures are different or incomprehensible. Colonisation distorts or "disables" these cultures so that they are necessarily incomprehensible (LC, 138). Colonisers require mimics. Mimics are doubles of the coloniser, but at the same time, they are disconcertingly different. They "estrange" symbols of British authority and self-presence, repeating them in a different way. Colonial authority requires self-evident rules of recognition. But these rules of recognition need to represent things which colonialism also sees as incomprehensible and beyond its purview. This contradiction stems from the underlying structure of disavowal. Bhabha insists that it is not just a psychological phenomenon which can be repressed indefinitely. Nor is it a dialectical contradiction which can be overcome. It is repeated in statements and is thus "strategic". It provides space for resistance (LC, 130-1). It also points towards the ambivalence at the heart of language and identity. It thus opens up the space of cultural creation (LC, 135).

According to Bhabha, colonialism is not primarily authoritarian command or repression of local cultures. It is primarily a process of creating hybrids through disavowal. It thus creates space for a 'strategic reversal' which undermines it (LC, 112). Colonial power-structures can be subverted from inside. Colonised people can return the gaze of power. And when they do this, they undermine colonial "narcissism" and "transparency". They cause, instead, a reaction of paranoia (LC, 113, 168). This subversion through mirroring happens solely on a surface level. It does not involve any relationship of depth. It also does not involve any third term or moment of reconciliation. It just turns symbols into

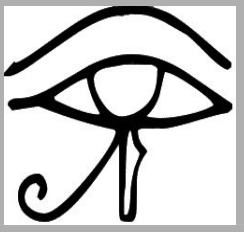
signs (LC, 113-14). It is not the content of their discourse which has this effect. Contents can always be "appropriated" or represented. Rather, it is the simple existence or presence of the hybrid which turns symbols into signs. In the positionality of the hybrid, the ambivalence of colonialism is on display as a sign. Difference is not 'simply *there* to be seen or appropriated' (LC, 114). It disrupts the authority of colonial knowledge.

A hybrid person retains the content of the colonial "symbols". But this person also resists their appearance of self-presence (LC, 115). The very fact that colonial symbols pass through supplementarity or through difference renders them non-self-present. In practice, the way this happens is through the re-reading of symbols without their original cultural connotations and associations (LC, 119). They are understood, but interpreted in terms of a different set of background assumptions. The 'questions that arise' from this point 'interrupt' the colonial 'voice of command' (LC, 116). They instead produce terror and fear – plunging the coloniser into the imaginary 'other scene' of 'fixations and phantoms' (LC, 116). Bhabha's symbols refer largely to the Lacanian field of the Imaginary. This is one of the three main divisions of the psyche in Lacan's work, along with the Symbolic and the Real. The Imaginary is the field in which identity-formation, co-constitution, narcissism, and the *che vuoi* mechanism operate. Bhabha in effect sees the Imaginary as progressive, because it disrupts the Symbolic - or the order of social meanings.

The distinction between ***signs*** and ***symbols*** is taken from structuralist semiotics. In particular, it is used by Roland Barthes. "Symbols" are conventional pairings of a signifier and a signified (see Chapter 2). A signifier is a word – written, spoken, etc – and a signified is something is refers to. Most structuralist theory deals with symbols in this sense (though confusingly, they are also called "signs" by some writers). Symbols are "arbitrary" in relation to what they refer to. They are assigned conventionally, based on social tradition. For example, English-speakers usually know what kind of animal a "cow" is. But there is no reason the spoken or written word "cow" should be attached to this particular set of animals. (Some symbols also incorporate elements of what they represent, for example pictograms. But they still function as socially-assigned symbols). Symbols contribute to precise meaning. They are usually limited to one or a few sets of signifieds. And they contribute to social meaning. They are usually common to people who speak the same language.

On the other hand, signs include anything which refers to something else. If something can be taken as evidence of something else, it's a sign. Smoke is a sign of fire. Animal tracks are signs an animal has passed. A thunderstorm might be taken as a sign of a god's anger. Signs aren't necessarily arbitrary, the same way symbols are. Something which has no clear meaning might nonetheless serve as a sign. For example, a Bible distributed by English missionaries is a sign of the presence of English people, even if its content isn't understood. A mass revolt is a sign of discontent even if the authorities don't understand the reasons for the revolt. Also, connoted meanings are often signs. They refer to something meaningful to a particular reader, and produce an emotional response.

They seem to point to the essence of something, beyond the direct meaning of a statement or image. Bhabha seems to be saying that hybridity in the context of disavowal turns symbols into signs. The hybrid occupies the place of two contradictory symbols at once. So they stop being symbols. Instead, they become a sign. Specifically, they become a sign of the disavowal and ambivalence underpinning colonial power. That's why they're disconcerting for colonisers.



For Bhabha, therefore, the move from symbol to sign is a good thing. It breaks down rigid meanings and identities. It replaces them with indications of underlying experiences which can't be symbolised. Barthes actually has a rather different approach to colonialism. In his *Mythologies* collection, Barthes (1972) wrote several pieces dealing with colonialism and racism. The most relevant to Bhabha is a piece criticising pro-colonial French discourses about Algeria. Like Saïd (see below, 552-61), Barthes focuses on colonialist essentialism. He dislikes the moralised nature of the discourse – the way it uses language to convey hidden normative commitments. For example, terms like Algeria's "destiny" or France's "mission" are used as postulates. They're stated without being proven or assigned meanings. Opponents are called 'bands' rather than armies or political movements. This implies in advance that they can't be negotiated with. Nouns play the main role in colonial discourse. Verbs are reduced to simply asserting nouns. And adjectives are used mainly to essentialise. The entire discourse serves to naturalise the situation of colonial war and make it seem like a disaster without human causes.

Barthes is here talking about colonial power in what Bhabha calls its "paranoid" mode. It is dealing in signs, not symbols. But unlike Bhabha, Barthes is harshly critical of this way of seeing. He does not see it as a progressive subversion of modern reason. In *Mythologies*, Barthes criticises a special type of signification he calls "myth". Ordinary denotative language attaches a conventional signifier to a signified. "Myth" adds a second level of connotative signification. It takes a conventional state of affairs to connote something essential or natural. Barthes considers myths to be politically harmful. They naturalise what are actually socially constructed phenomena. Adding "-ness" or "-ity" to a regular concept is one of the indicators of a Barthesian myth. For example, there are particular Basque people, who really exist. But there is also an image of "Basquity" or "Basqueness", for example in a certain style of architecture. "Basquity" is associated with the reduction of Basque people to cultural particularities. It also implies the removal of these particularities from their social context. The idea of "Basquity" implies there are essential traits of all Basques. Barthes finds this objectionable. And he sees it as a central aspect of colonial power.

Sometimes, colonial writers themselves acknowledge the existence of a contradiction. Bhabha uses an example of a British politician who argued that it was unreasonable to expect of Indians, as liberals did, that they would be discontented with colonialism but should restrain their ambitions and actions (LC, 129). According to this critic, liberals expect revolt and passivity at the same time. Bhabha suggests that these dual aspects of colonialism cannot be seen as a contradiction. They are both demanded at once. This is because they remain permanently undecidable. No reconciliation or synthesis is possible (LC, 130-1). Also, they should not be seen as irreconcilable antagonisms (LC, 131). Rather, the split in discourse is constitutive. It is not the Hegelian master-slave dialectic, but a matter of enslaved masters and unmastered slaves (LC, 131). In other words, the contradiction does not just run between subjects. It runs through each of the subjects. It

isn't necessarily something to be overcome. It's something which disrupts colonialism from the inside. Politically, this ambiguity corresponds to a doubling of democracy with despotism in the colonies (LC, 97, 133). The colonial power is both a despotic absolute government, and a reforming democracy seeking to create western-style states. The colonial power both stands for the colony as representative, and represents the colony as radically different from it. This 'doublethink' is sustainable only through disavowal (LC, 111). It creates a form of ambivalence in which truth cannot be felt to exist (LC, 135). Similarly, colonialism assumes both that colonial spaces are empty spaces, and that they are spaces of despotism and thus eternal repetition (LC, 246). Again, this reflects the 'time-lag'.

Ambivalence is subversive because it disrupts the relationship between language and speech. Ordinary speech, within a culture which has cultural identity, includes the 'ability to put the right word in the right place at the right time'. The passage of language through colonial difference and “the archaic” takes away this aspect of speech (LC, 125). The archaic is similar to Derrida's hymen, one of various terms Derrida uses for an undecidable inbetween space or state (LC, 127). Bhabha is here referring to the existence of background, habitual assumptions within cultures. These habitual assumptions are usually bracketed-out or black-boxed. They are not explicitly asserted, but operate as unwritten codes through which people with cultural knowledge make sense of manifest claims. When a text, statement or repertoire passes through cultural difference, it is read through a different set of background assumptions, which give it a different meaning and effect.

For example, Bhabha discusses Indian receptions of Christianity. He argues that the text of the Bible stays the same. Indians actually affirmed Bible quotes. But these quotes were taken outside their usual supportive context of codes, connotations and cultural associations. They became out-of-place, and other than how they are usually understood (LC, 119). The very success of colonial missionary-work is also its failure, because the coloniser loses control of the meaning of the text. The meaning is distorted and deconstructed by the ambiguity of the colonial situation itself. He also has an unusual reading of the Haitian Revolution. This was a successful anti-colonial and anti-slavery revolt in today's Haiti (then known as Saint-Domingue or San Domingo), against French colonisers, in 1791-1804. It happened shortly after the French Revolution (1789) and was clearly inspired by it. Most accounts treat this revolution as inspired by the values of the French Revolution (James, 1938; Hallward, 2001, 2004). However, Bhabha reads it as an effect of split consciousness. 'What', asks Bhabha, 'do we make of the figure of Toussaint', the Haitian revolutionary leader, 'when he grasps the tragic lesson that the moral, *modern* disposition of mankind, enshrined in the sign of the Revolution, only fuels the archaic racial factor in the society of slavery?' (LC, 244) Hence, for Bhabha, the Haitian Revolution is not an extension of French revolutionary ideas, but an exposé of their inherent racism. His reading of W.E.B. Du Bois follows a similar trajectory. Du Bois might think he's a modernist, critiquing the *content* of western science, but for Bhabha he's actually showing its limits, forcing it to recede (LC, 255).

Bhabha thus writes stories about the ways in which the coloniser's drive for power interacts with the colonised subject's resistance. These stories often seem to anthropomorphise (turn into human-like actors) concepts such as colonialism, coloniser and colonised. Phillips (1998) argues that Bhabha reproduces the generalised idea of the colonial subject which he finds in colonial texts. Bhabha fails to unpack and differentiate this broad category. An unconscious power-game is assumed to be going on beneath the surface of everyday relationships. This power-game reflects unconscious positionalities

(socially defined identities or subject-positions), presumably formed through "interpellations", or social assignations of meaning. These positionalities interact in a kind of struggle for discursive power. This entails Bhabha knowing what's 'really' going on, on an unconscious level, better than the actors involved. His approach involves an implied social ontology. By implication, everyone is constantly engaged in discursive 'strategies'. We all spend all (or most) of our time jostling for symbolic position, defending or subverting discursive standpoints, claiming or denying voice. This involves a rather cynical view of people's motives and actions.

Bhabha discusses the subversive effects of ambiguity mainly in terms of effects. It is unclear if the ambiguities of colonial discourse are only visible to critics such as Bhabha, or if colonised people actively exploit these ambiguities (Young, 1990:193). There is an ambiguity in Bhabha's theory, because the ambivalence in the colonial text is sometimes attributed to the constitutive nature of all texts, and sometimes to resistance by the colonised (Easthope, 2002:52). Bhabha has also been accused of blurring the issue of whether the resistances he identifies are conscious (Moore-Gilbert, 1997:38). In Bhabha's theoretical language, something can be a 'strategy', or a form of resistance, without being consciously intended as such. There is no need for ethnographic or psychoanalytic work to establish what a cultural gesture is doing. It seems not to matter what actors think they are doing. What they are really doing can be read-off from the strategic relations inherent in the text.

Colonial identity is not really a relationship between self and other, as distinct individuals or groups. Rather, the coloniser's "other" is a projection. The coloniser views the colonised as the site of the otherness of the coloniser's self (LC, 44). Colonial texts and situations – whether the writings of colonial novelists such as Rudyard Kipling, the writings of colonised or anti-colonial novelists such as V.S. Naipaul, the documents of colonial power, or actual events such as the 1857 Indian Rebellion – express a recurring symbolic structure. Colonisers seek to lock down meaning in the situation, by defining it as something fixed and comprehensible. Colonised subjects are consigned to subordinate, passive positions within this system of meaning. Instead of identifying with these positions, colonised subjects subvert the colonial system of meaning. They bring together the coloniser and colonised, and create texts which weave together different systems of meaning. They thus create an 'indeterminacy of intertextuality' (LC, 33), a situation where two texts render each other ambiguous. This indeterminacy subverts colonial meaning and therefore colonial power. Through such responses to colonialism, the decisive language of colonial masters is rendered hybrid, fluid, and ambiguous. It becomes impossible to specify or calculate. In this way, 'cultural difference' (in the sense of radical difference, or incommensurability; see Chapter 9) comes to operate inside colonial language itself (LC, 33).

This process of disruption of colonial authority can be traced, for instance, in literature (LC, 113). In colonial and postcolonial texts (including artworks), the issue of identity 'returns as a persistent questioning of the frame'. The colonial image is constantly confronted with its Other, or its internal difference (LC, 46). Such art often focuses on the issue of invisibility or the inability to see – a problem with the object of the gaze (LC, 46-7). There are also places where, for example, a stereotype is endorsed and denied at the same time (LC, 48). The resultant process, according to Bhabha, is a *doubling* (LC, 49). It is not a contradiction which can be resolved. Rather, it is an 'impasse' or 'aporia' – an insoluble blockage.

Bhabha explores mimicry further in a discussion of Du Bois's *Dark Princess*. The Indian character in this historical novel simultaneously endorses stereotypical Asian femininity and articulates modernist political views. Bhabha rejects the view that it is an 'ideological or "class" contradiction'. Rather, he suggests, it 'is transformed by the "rule of juxtaposition" into a wily and wise political message' (BSDP, 146). Colonised Indians, as Chatterjee (1993) argues, divided the world between material and spiritual domains. They retained Indian culture in the 'inner' spiritual realm, while endorsing modernity in the 'outer' material realm. This, says Bhabha, 'mimics the colonialist's color-line of archaism and modernity, *up to a point*' (BSDP, 147). His point is that it does not really copy colonial contradictions. It also 'introduces an inappropriatable or untranslatable element of *juxtaposition*' which disrupts colonial temporality (BSDP, 148). It makes the archaic and the modern coexistent (i.e. makes them exist together). This disrupts the colonial binary, and asserts a right to equality-in-difference (BSDP, 148). It is this conclusion - that ambivalence leads directly to a Derridean/Levinasian ethic (see below, 683-94) – that gives political weight to Bhabha's sociological claims.

Colonised people mimic colonial discourse, but in a way which subverts it. This makes mutual trust impossible. The colonised subject is always somewhere between acquiescent and oppositional, and is therefore untrustworthy (LC, 33). This, in turn, renders colonial authority impossible. Anyone trying to exercise authority in a colonial situation faces an insoluble problem of trying to create certainty out of ambiguity. Colonialism is thus split at its base. It manifests contradictory, alienating actions and ideas. For instance, it both seeks to 'modernise' the colonised and maintain their traditional institutions in 'mummified' forms. It validates violence at the basis of social life, while claiming to be civilised and opposed to violence. It creates caricatured, racist images which reflect its own fantasies. It both demands that the colonised join the coloniser's 'club', and keeps them forever out. Bhabha, following Fanon, terms these processes a 'Manichean delirium' (LC, 43) – which is to say, a psychosis caused by binary categories. ("Manichean" is a term for strong us-them or good-evil belief-systems, in which the entire world is seen in binary terms. The historical Manicheans were a religious movement in what is today Iran which saw the world as a struggle between utterly counterposed forces of light and darkness. Strangely, Zoroastrianism, the religion of Bhabha's ethnic group, takes a similar view). For Bhabha, colonialism is the underside and supplement of modernity. He is particularly hostile to ideas of colonialism or racism as pre-modern or regressive (see LC, 248-9). However, he doesn't so much critique such ideas as stick negative labels on them. They are 'disavowals' of the way things really are, and they rob minorities of their strategic, liminal spaces inside modernity. For Bhabha, disagreement with his theory is not so much empirically wrong as politically irresponsible.

Colonial power poses as pure presence. In fact, it is always caught-up in a process of 'writing', or social construction (LC, 93). Colonialism imagines itself to be a proudly integrated whole. But in fact, it rests on conjugation – the word 'and'. The additions entailed by the word 'and' render authority ambiguous. This authority is always 'less than one and double' (LC, 97). Colonialism tries to find its reflection, its *che vuoi* other, in the colonised. But this fails because of textual subversion and ambiguity. The encounter of the 'self', or coloniser, with something it cannot see, or reduce to the regime of representation/mirroring, has certain effects. It leaves a trace or a stain, a sign of resistance (LC, 49). This encounter with a trace, stain, or sign is not an 'ontological problem of being', but a discursive moment of interrogation (LC, 49). An interrogation, in this context, is a a process of questioning or being questioned, a deconstruction, an exposure or making-apparent of underlying contradictions and blockages. The normal process of subjectification produces an effect of 'depth'. In contrast, the colonial process frustrates this effect. Doubling occludes or spatialises the subject (LC, 50), which no longer feels obvious and deep. This process is not a disavowed truth of the colonial subject, but the condition of its production (LC, 50). This psychological disruption of self/other identity-formation is disruptive of colonialism. It creates space for anti-colonial resistance.

The 'colonial text' – a term encompassing the texts of coloniser or colonised, both literary and political, as well as everyday life in the colonies – emerges inbetween two poles. These are the command or 'edict' of the colonial metropole (England, France, etc) and the 'dark unruly spaces of the earth' in which this edict is distorted, displaced, or ineffective (LC, 107). Colonialism does not simply represent the Other. It projects and disavows its own internal ambiguity (Young, 1990:184). The colonial space is on the one hand a site of mastery, representation, and the invention of 'history' (in the sense of a linear process), and on the other, a site of displacement, psychological defences such as projection, and 'open textuality' (LC, 108). Colonial authority rests less on the universal claims of the coloniser than on their productivity as signs of difference (LC, 108). Colonial domination requires disavowal of the element of dislocation or displacement (LC, 111). Yet it also operates by constantly marking colonised subjects as different (LC, 111). To sustain this doublethink, it must represent the colonised, while keeping this object beyond its purview (LC, 111). It must see and represent the colonised, while also treating them as impossible to see and represent.

In the Margins: Projection

The concept of ***projection*** is one of several ego defence-mechanisms theorised by Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis. The theory is later taken further by Anna Freud and Melanie Klein. According to Freud, psychological imbalance arises from conflicts between the outer world and instinctual drives, or between one's desires and one's internal moral compass. In order to sustain itself, the ego uses defence-mechanisms. These are a major source of "resistance" in psychoanalytic treatment – a negative term for patients/analysands resisting the process. They are a way to ward off the anxiety arising from particular emotions or thoughts. They operate unconsciously and people are usually unaware that they are using defence-mechanisms. Besides projection, other defence-mechanisms include denial, repression, displacement, regression to childhood, rationalisation, and sublimation. There is also "introjection", or bringing others' traits inside oneself.

Projection is a particular defence mechanism which involves unconsciously denying a quality within oneself and instead attributing it to others. Whereas straightforward denial simply doesn't recognise the unwanted thought or feeling is there, projection admits it's there but sees it as a trait of someone else. It is as if the unwanted thought or desire is "projected" out of the self and onto the image of the other person. For example, a person who has aggressive or sadistic drives, but who is unable to recognise these drives, might instead imagine that others are constantly being aggressive towards them. Someone who feels vulnerable but can't accept this might bully others. Someone who feels guilty might make false accusations to project guilt onto others.

Freud works with a model where the psyche (or mind) is split into three distinct forces. The id is based on impulse or desire. It wants satisfaction of primal urges such as sex, aggression and hunger. The ego operates on the "reality principle". It seeks to keep the organism alive in the world, if necessary by frustrating or deferring desires. It also tries to mediate between the world, the id, and the superego. The superego is a part of the ego which splits off and is turned against it. It operates as the bearer of morality, perfectionism, and self-judging internal demands. It is usually an internalisation of parental or social norms.

Projection generally happens when someone can't integrate their positive and negative traits into a single self-image. It is most common when someone has a fragile ego due to a traumatic childhood. Klein suggests that very young children form strong positive and negative images. Particular objects are "split" into the positive and negative aspects. If someone is functioning in terms of the "splitting" found in early childhood, projection is particularly common. In some cases, the other is expected to also identify with the projected traits. Good as well as bad traits can be projected. Projection also happens on a national and international level. It is particularly intense when people feel threatened or when their id or superego is particularly demanding. Projection appears in Bhabha's theory of colonialism. It is more central to Fanon's theory, in which impulses repressed in western society are taken to be characteristically associated with black people. For example, black people are seen as sexually overactive and aggressive. There might be no empirical basis whatsoever for believing this. Or, it might be a misunderstanding of other cultures. It happens because Europeans see their own unwanted traits in their "other".

Bhabha defines the colonial social text in a particular way. Currently dominant 'master narratives' are effects of 'Western modernity'. This particular metanarrative, or big story, affects everything from the state/citizen relationship to art, science, novels, games, etc. According to Bhabha, Western modernity arose in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, mainly in Europe. (Some scholars draw the line earlier in history). Modernity came to define most of life, and is a kind of outer frame for what people believe today (TS, 218). The history of colonialism is an underside or 'counter-history' of modernity. It is part of what happened in and because of modernity. But it is marginalised or ignored in the way modern histories and modern norms are usually constructed (TS, 218). Colonialism is split-off or projected, much like individual traits can be. This split between "good" modernity and "bad" colonialism is part of a process of projection. However, modernity is actually very complex, if seen transculturally (RA, 60). Bhabha rejects the idea that modernity is fundamentally alienating or objectifying, or that modernity is a grand narrative (RA, 60).

Modernity is a text. Therefore, it is haunted by problems arising from the standard difficulties of identity-construction. In relation to modernity, these problems appear as issues of dealing with archaic, supposedly pre-modern cultural forms (IoP, 25). In fact, this 'time-lag' is an internal contradiction within modernity. Modernity is haunted by ambiguity, just like every text. This ambiguity expresses itself in the inability to fully distinguish the past from the present. Colonised societies often seem like they're in the past and the present at the same time. This is not a result of underdevelopment. Rather, it's an effect of the inherent ambiguity of modernity as a text. The modern text is gradually breaking down. Social life is constantly shifting. This slippage of modernity is an effect of the constant slippage of signifiers. It means that categories, which are necessarily already contradictory, become increasingly contradictory over time (Shumar, 2010:499).

This creates the condition of postcoloniality. At this point, the splitting of "good" modernity from "bad" colonialism begins to fray. This creates possibilities for resistance,

based on ambivalence and ambiguity. Postcoloniality does not entail being temporally 'after' colonialism. It is another name for the disjunctive internal contradiction of colonialism (Parry, 2004:57). This "moment" is particularly visible today, as modernity and colonial discourse continue to fray. The transgressive activity of the colonised subject is a special case of the play of writing (LC, 59), and thus, the general rules of how identity is formed. However, Bhabha also adds a qualifier that colonial ambivalence cannot be read-off directly from the ambivalence of writing in general (LC, 129).

Colonialism is the constitutive underside of modernity. Modernity needs colonialism, but denies that colonialism is its own underside, or bad side. It projects its own "badness" onto others. There is really a dependence of "good" modernity on "bad" colonial violence. For example, civility is constituted through colonial violence, and the rights of the people through discrimination (LC, 175). Bhabha clearly sees such undersides as constitutive and unavoidable. It isn't simply that the west is hypocritical in denying some people its benefits. And it isn't mainly an issue of economic exploitation. (However, Bhabha recognises, economic dependency, geopolitical imperialism, and the position of complicit Southern artists in passing [LC, 20-1]). Bhabha differentiates postcolonial theory from dependency theory because of its rejection of binaries, nationalism and nativism (CF, 63). Instead, he sees North-South relations as complex. The benefits of modernity

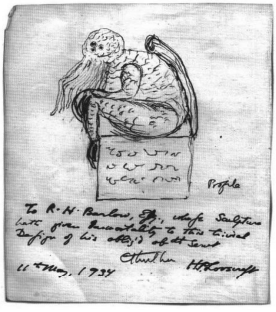
rely on the supplement – not only contingently, but ontologically. This leads Bhabha to reject ideas such as the western liberal polity, rights, equality, and so on. The west defines civility in a way which excludes the non-western Other (LC, 32). Western discourse only tolerates differences it can assimilate without translation. Otherwise, the discourses of civilisation and progress are used (RF, xiii). However, the origins of modernity do not lie simply in the *concept* of civility. Rather, they lie in the colonial moment of history (LC, 32).

Disruptive textual effects arise because of an excess in the colonial context over the coloniser's projections. The 'anteriority and alterity' – the past and difference – in the colonial context cannot be signified within the colonial language (LC, 127). It signifies the underside which modernity cannot see. Bhabha suggests that there is a 'counter-modernity' or submerged narrative in colonial texts. This submerged narrative subverts linear views of history (LC, 173). It can be uncovered by reading texts 'against the grain' (LC, 174). However, like many of Bhabha's readings, such 'against the grain' deconstructionism relies as much on the reader's presuppositions as on the content of the texts. Sceptics might object that Bhabha's readings force texts into preconceived conclusions. Bhabha could reply, in line with Derrida's theory of texts, that *every* reading depends on the reader's interpretations (see above, 304-5, 360-1). But does this mean every reading is equally valid, or is Bhabha claiming particular validity for his claim that colonialism is haunted by ambiguity?

Bhabha's critique of modernity also targets the modern sense of time. According to Bhabha, modernity is itself constructed in a contradictory, unresolved way. Its internal contradiction arises between a defining, European discourse and its global inscriptions. This contradiction is expressed as an idea of 'time-lag', or the backwardness of colonised and postcolonial societies (LC, 238). The time-lag is an image of the simultaneous existence of a pre-modern past with a modern present in colonial and postcolonial societies. This time-lag repeats the 'primal scene', or traumatic early memory of western society – the transition from dynastic lineage societies to horizontal, homogeneous secular communities (LC, 250), i.e. from medieval to modern Europe. It gives the lie to the modern view of time as progress from backwardness towards development. Rather than being temporally separate, the different supposed stages of history exist in the same place, at the same time. They are internal moments of the same process. This means that time is not linear and progressive after all.

According to Bhabha, history is discontinuous. There is a gap or 'time-lag' between any event and its assigned meaning (LC, 243). The 'time-lag' is not simply the slippage of signifiers. It is the 'cut' or 'break' established by the Real. This 'cut' does not only slice into the illusion of self-presence or completeness. It also halts the slippage of signifiers, and the proliferation of difference (LC, 245). This shows that common views of time are inadequate. The point is not just to change narratives about history. It is to change one's sense of time and space, and what it means to live (LC, 256). The time-lag often appears when history repeats itself. It is seen in liberal accounts as a kind of historical determinism, invoked when consensus fails (CIB, 59). For example, the affirmation 'never again' (regarding genocide) is often frustrated by history (SS, 142). It also seems, for instance, as if ethnic and racial conflicts involve a return to an earlier historical period. They might be portrayed as atavistic local events, or a return to nineteenth century imperialist politics. In fact, this is a form of internal 'amnesia' about the basis of the liberal order itself (CIB, 59).

In line with the idea of "time-lag", Bhabha sometimes treats "the archaic", or the apparent presence of the past, as a source of disruption of colonialism. One exemplar for the archaic is the Marabar caves in E.M. Forster's novel *A Passage to India*. The caves simply reply with a meaningless 'ou-boum' noise, whatever is said there. Another example is the monstrous presence in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* which can only be represented as 'the Horror, the Horror!' (LC, 124). For Bhabha, such depictions do not simply naturalise colonial otherness as primitive. They depict an 'uncertain colonial silence' which mocks and disrupts language (LC, 124). The archaic is similar to the Lacanian Real, which returns and disrupts meaning. Indeed, the archaic disrupts the very formation of meaning. It produces juxtapositions of radically different kinds of speech. It also locates colonial writing in a hybrid space and time beyond literature and history (LC, 128).



Bhabha's main proposal in this regard is to replace linear time with ruptural, juxtaposed time, the moment of inbetweenness. Bhabha has written on the Rushdie affair, in which radical Muslims attacked the postcolonial fiction author Salman Rushdie for alleged blasphemy and apostasy. In the context of showing the hybridity of cultures and the slippage of signifiers, Rushdie made comments some Muslims found offensive. In particular, a passage in which the Devil (Shaitan) rather than God (Allah) dictated a particular, blasphemous passage to Mohammed is central to the work. This led to outcry. The Iranian government called for Rushdie's death, and some Muslims called for the book to be censored. The British and European public reacted with outrage at Muslims' ostensibly outdated, medieval reactions to religious heresy. Many commentators counterposed modern, western free speech to pre-modern, Muslim intolerance. For

Bhabha, however, this misses the point. What is significant about the Rushdie affair is that it is happening now, on the basis of politics 'functioning very much in our time'. It is not about medieval versus modern ideas (TS, 215). In other words, the apparent time-lag is not really a time-lag at all, but an internal contradiction of modernity.

In the Margins: Salman Rushdie and the Rushdie Affair

Salman Rushdie is a British-Indian novelist. He is of Muslim origin but is a self-described 'hard-line atheist', a socialist and a humanist.

He is best-known for the controversy surrounding his fourth novel, *The Satanic Verses*, in 1988-9. However, his greatest critical success was the novel *Midnight's Children*, published in 1981. This novel is about the partition of India and Pakistan, and the authoritarian 'Emergency' regime of Indira Gandhi in India in the 1970s. It involves people with telepathic powers who are caught up in the historical events and whose personal narratives also allegorically parallel the events. Rushdie uses the style known as "magical realism" alongside standard historical fiction. Magical realism is a style which introduces magical or supernatural elements into largely realistic settings. Most of Rushdie's works focus on East-West contact. Much of his work is politically provocative. Prior to *The Satanic Verses*, Rushdie "trolled" political leaders in India and Pakistan. He portrayed them in a satirical and unflattering light.

The Satanic Verses includes an overarching plot, and also several sub-plots told as dream stories. The main characters are Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha. They are both Indian actors. Gibreel is a successful Bollywood actor whereas Saladin is an English-based voice actor who has rejected his Indian roots. The two actors miraculously survive a plane explosion in the English Channel and transform into different personalities. Gibreel becomes the Archangel Gabriel and Saladin becomes a devil. Gibreel reunites with his lost romantic partner. But the relationship is disrupted by Gibreel's psychological problems and Saladin's revenge attempts. The novel ends with Gibreel killing his partner and then himself. But Saladin, who has obtained forgiveness from Gibreel, is redeemed and stays in India. The novel is written in such a way that it is hard to tell if the events depicted are real, or delusions/hallucinations experienced by the characters. Its tone is generally humorous, although it deals with serious themes.

The most controversial aspects of the work generally occur in dream sequences. One passage involves a retelling of the life of Mohammed under the name "Mahound". This is a real alternative form of the name '"Mohammed", but has been used historically as an insult (because of its similarity to "hound"). In the dream sequence, Mahound initially endorses the old, pre-Islamic gods and then changes his mind, blaming the devil. This is partly based on an incident in Islamic history where Mohammed is said to have referenced three pre-Islamic deities in a supposed revelation from the Archangel Gabriel, which has often been analysed as a Satanic suggestion. (The historicity of the incident is debated in Islamic scholarship). The account also involves a demon disguising sex workers as Mohammed's wives, and Mohammed's companions altering parts of the Qur'an (which Muslims believe is a direct revelation from God). Other dream sequences involve an attempt to walk from India to Mecca across the sea based on an angelic revelation, and a fanatical religious leader in exile, who appears to be a parody of the Iranian political and religious strongman of the time, Ayatollah Khomeini.

Conservative and radical Muslims reacted extremely negatively to the novel. They claimed it mocked the Muslim faith, and accused Rushdie of blasphemy and heresy. The dream sequences dealing with Mohammed were the main focus of the controversy, but critics also objected to the book's title (which links Satan to the Qur'an) and the misuse of various Islamic names (such as the hero Saladin as the name for a devil in the book). Some of the criticisms seem to be based on misunderstandings or wilfully hostile readings (for example, by attributing the views of unpleasant characters to the author, imputing nonexistent claims, and imagining that the work was not fiction but propaganda). Non-Muslim readers were reportedly unaware of the obscure and disguised references to the history of Islam, and did not foresee the controversy. The reception of the controversy reproduced stereotypical images of "the west" and "Islam" on both sides.

The book was banned or censored in all Muslim-majority countries except Turkey, as well as a number of countries with Muslim minorities, including India, Thailand, Tanzania, Singapore, South Africa, Liberia, and

Venezuela. In several locations, latent tensions between Islamists and local governments were catalysed by the controversy. Police opened fire on protesters in Mumbai, India, killing 12 people. In Pakistan, Islamist protesters attacked American targets, and regime forces killed six protesters. Indian troops also killed a protester during unrest in Kashmir. Some time later, Islamists hunting a local translator of the novel burnt down a hotel in Turkey, killing 37. Bookstores were also firebombed in Britain and America, and protesters burned the book during marches. In Lebanon, opponents of the book took a British citizen hostage, adding to the number of western hostages in the country.

Most famously, the Ayatollah (supreme religious ruler) of Iran, Ruhollah Khomeini, issued a *fatwa* (legal ruling) calling for Rushdie to be killed. Iran was a totalitarian dictatorship in the 1980s but has gradually transitioned to a quasi-democratic model where power circulates between conservative and reforming factions. The regime is still very repressive and socially conservative, but the power of the Ayatollah is less absolute today. But in the 1980s, Khomeini was effectively the country's dictator and the Shi'ite equivalent of the Pope at the same time. His fatwa thus carried considerable weight. The legal reasoning behind it was never provided (in deviation from Islamic norms). But, the condemnation of Rushdie appears to revolve around abuse of Mohammed and apostasy. Many Muslim jurists believe the ruling to be highly flawed.

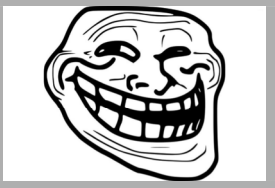
The context was as much political as religious. Iran had been under a conservative authoritarian regime claiming religious legitimacy since the revolution of 1979. This regime often used discontent with western slights (real and perceived) to bolster its religious nationalism. There was diplomatic fallout from the Rushdie affair, including a brief suspension of diplomatic relations between Britain and Iran. Full relations were not restored until 1998. Rushdie survived several assassination attempts and was put under "police protection". This meant that he was effectively in hiding most of the time, under 24-hour armed guard. One of his translators was murdered and two others injured in attacks. Iran's reformist president Mohammed Khatami partially renounced the fatwa in 1998, and Rushdie came out of hiding, although the current Ayatollah has renewed the *fatwa* and conservative Iranian groups continue to offer bounties.

The Rushdie controversy is usually framed as a clash of cultures pitting intolerant Muslims against the western value of freedom of speech. However, the actual situation was much more complex. The Iranian

government had interests in stoking tensions, appealing to Sunni Muslims (who were then largely hostile to Shi'ite-led Iran), competing with Saudi Arabia for Muslim support, and distracting attention from the failure of the Iran-Iraq War and the Soviet defeat in Afghanistan. Many postcolonial countries, including Muslim countries, are hypersensitive about perceived aggression or insults by colonial powers. Khomeini portrayed Rushdie's book as part of a British or American plot against the Muslim world, and this position carried emotional weight because of colonial legacies. Rushdie's satirical portrayals were perceived as repeating longstanding anti-Muslim stereotypes found throughout western literature. Most Muslim countries have authoritarian censorship laws, and citizens assumed that Britain and America must have them too. Indeed, Britain did have a blasphemy law at the time. Therefore, it was assumed that the government deliberately allowed publication of the book in defiance of laws against insulting Islam, as an act of anti-Muslim bias. Many opponents had no idea, or a highly distorted idea, what the book contained. For instance, some thought it was a Satanist critique of Islam, while others thought it was a supposedly factual historical account which distorted Islamic history. It is also noteworthy that political Islam was on the rise in the 1980s because of the failure and decline of left-leaning Arab nationalism. In large part, the struggles around political Islam are struggles for power among different social and political groups within Muslim-majority countries (see Ahmed, 2003; Devji, 2005).

Reactions of this kind are expected today and have recurred several times, most notably in the Mohammed cartoon controversy in 2006. However, the controversy was not foreseen when Rushdie's novel was published in 1988. "Globalisation" was only starting to be felt. *The Satanic Verses* was published in English and was not initially released in the Muslim world, which would previously have guaranteed its obscurity there. Now, however, news could

spread quickly through global communication networks. Most authors and civil rights groups rallied to support Rushdie. However, a few criticised him for opportunism and sensationalism, arguing that he insulted Muslims on purpose to gain notoriety.



In a typical example of the "Streisand Effect" (i.e. censorship increasing popularity), sales of the book shot up due to the controversy. *The Satanic Verses* sold 750,000 copies in its first year, compared to lifetime sales of around 250,000 for the more critically successful *Midnight's Children*. The book is publisher Viking's all-time best-seller and has appeared in underground *samizdat* editions in countries where it is banned. This is very impressive, for a densely written work of arthouse fiction! However, in addition to living a restricted life due to the fatwa, Rushdie was reportedly unhappy that the controversy had stoked Islamophobic stereotypes. This was the opposite of his intent with the novel. He also seemed to oscillate between defiance and appeasement towards Iran.

Bhabha's main interest in Rushdie's work is in relation to the idea that hybrid, migrant experiences produce new cultures and forms of life. Bhabha argues that *The Satanic Verses* involves a decentring of British nationality, in the Derridean sense. In other words, it shows that the apparently stable British national identity actually depends on its boundary-work in relation to its Other. Gibreel's imitation of Henry Diamond in the novel is a kind of postcolonial mimicry. It exposes the cracks and absences in national identity. For Bhabha, Rushdie shows that the English cannot look their history in the eye, and that national identity is always made through displacement and ambivalence. In *The Satanic Verses*, migrants come from the margins to change the national narrative, showing its disavowed underside. This does not explain, however, why white British people seemed largely unoffended by the novel, whereas some Muslims reacted with

outrage. Bhabha does not deal in much detail with the context, beyond a speculative psychoanalysis of "fundamentalists" as anti-hybrid. However, he does discuss briefly whether the "translation" of the Qur'an into poetry (traditionally a medium of mockery) was part of the issue (LC, 226).

Other critics have read the work in various ways, and these are closer to Bhabha's interpretations than in the case of *Beloved* (see above, 202-11). *The Satanic Verses* is generally recognised as a work about migrants' alienation, disorientation, hybridity, self-transformation, and attempts to adapt to a national context (Brennan, 1996; ibn Ally, 1990; Spivak, 1990; Jusawalla, 1996; Sharp, 1994). It has also been read, in light of the controversy, as an attack on overly rigid belief-systems (Fletcher, 1994). As usual, more traditional literature scholars engage more closely with the text than Bhabha does. For example, Gane (2002) examines particular metaphors for migration in the novel, including air and metamorphosis. On the whole, however, Bhabha is very much within the mainstream of Rushdie interpretation.

For Bhabha, the Rushdie controversy is not really a confrontation between modernity and ascriptive tradition. Instead, it shows the subversive effects of hybridity. The hybridity of Rushdie's characters is anxiety-inducing for rigid Muslim identities as well as for rigid western identities. The misnaming of sacred Muslim names in profane spaces is taken to destroy the content of community (LC, 225). Hybridity is inherently blasphemous. It involves projected social fears. Rushdie's "crime", according to Bhabha, was to have placed the Qur'an in a relativist historical and cultural context – not to have misread or disputed its content. This seems rather a simplified polemical account of the controversy. If Islamists feared Rushdie's novel because it relativised Islam, the reason for this seems to be less a rejection of migrant hybridity (many Islamists are themselves hybrid migrants!) than a perception of syncretic east/west combinations as western cultural imperialism. As

in other cases, Bhabha reduces the affair simplistically to his general frame. He lacks alertness to local issues such as the assumption that censorship exists everywhere, the misframing of the novel as a non-fiction account or a western plot, and the underlying political and economic conditions fuelling political Islam.

Stereotypes

Bhabha analyses stereotypes as unsuccessful attempts to lock down meaning. He thinks they should be analysed in terms of subject-formation rather than as positive and negative images (LC, 67). Colonial discourse relies on ideological fixity (LC, 66). However, it also involves ambiguity. Stereotypes vacillate between fixing others in place and anxiously repeating a particular view which is thereby revealed as unstable (LC, 66). Stereotypes should be analysed in terms of their effects, especially for 'subjectification' (the creation of identities and subjects) (LC, 67). They should not be judged or dismissed. They are not simply crude repetitions, but differ in their strategic uses. They are complex and ambivalent – as much anxious as assertive (LC, 70). They are not objectionable because they are inaccurate. They are objectionable because they fix discourse in place, in fixed categories (LC, 75).

This process of fixing meaning is unsuccessful. Stereotypes seek to produce knowledge of the coloniser and colonised (LC, 70). Such knowledge arranges coloniser and colonised as antitheses, or complete opposites. However, stereotypes actually fail to produce certainty. Instead, they produce anxiety about a menacing image of the other (Huddart, 2006:41). The doubling involved in stereotypes is partly a matter of differences between symbolic and imaginary aspects of stereotypes. Saïd's theory of Orientalism, for instance, discusses both a field of 'scientific' knowledge and a field of dreams and fantasies (LC, 71). For Bhabha, these two aspects are closely linked. Knowledge, or representation, articulates fantasy to produce political effects (LC, 72). Although effective, this articulation also involves ambiguity, or 'productive ambivalence' (LC, 67), which interferes with its effects. It is ambivalent between affect and discourse. Struggles around racial inclusion are therefore not simply between fixity (or secure identification) and mixture. Mixture already haunts the supposedly fixed categories.

Stereotypes have assertive and anxious aspects. In its assertive aspect, a stereotype operates to impede the 'circulation and articulation' of signifiers of race (LC, 75). A stereotype asserts that members of a group are always alike, defined by a stereotypical essence (e.g. 'black people are emotionally unstable and violent'). When effective, this prevents the representation of the group as *anything but* this stereotype. In practice, stereotyping leads to discrimination (LC, 78). Discrimination is encouraged by the belief that difference is natural rather than socially constructed (LC, 79-80). However, Bhabha opposes the view that stereotypes simply create scapegoats based on false images. Instead, he argues that they are ambivalent, creating identities and deploying a range of psychological mechanisms (LC, 81). Discrimination is a process of splitting the coloniser's self from its imitators and doubles (LC, 111). It involves anxiety as well as assertion. The resultant identity is internally split between narcissistic and paranoiac (or aggressive) poles. These two poles are also associated with metaphor and metonymy as distinct processes.

Bhabha sees stereotypes less as lies about colonised people than as social roles they are expected to perform. Stereotypes are not so much representations as fixated forms of subjectivity. Their main role is to facilitate or enable colonial social relationships (LC, 78). As in Foucault's theory of knowledge – the role of knowledge is not to represent what already exists, but to produce something. However, the operation of stereotypes is doubled. They often involve contradictory images. For example, Black Africans or 'Negroes' were depicted as savages and cannibals, but also as obedient servants (LC, 82). For Bhabha, this doubling involves a splitting in colonial power/knowledge (LC, 83). By 'knowing' or defining the colonised as savages, colonialism could justify authoritarian repression. By 'knowing' or defining the colonised as conforming to colonialism, it could justify modern economic forms of power (LC, 83). The government of colonies thus usually combined harsh, authoritarian methods and efficient, modern forms of power. Hence, the doubling of stereotypes was an effect of a doubled power regime, linked to the time-lag.

Bhabha's approach is part of the wider field of postcolonial studies. However, he also disagrees subtly with other postcolonial authors. He suggests that certain kinds of 'racial/cultural/historical otherness' have been marginalised in western texts dealing with difference or contradiction, including postcolonial texts (LC, 67-8). Most approaches to stereotyping treat it as a secure point of identification, and thus ignore its ambiguity (LC, 69). Saïd, for instance, is said to 'contain' the threat of doubling by correlating the two fields (LC, 71). Bhabha objects that Saïd treats colonial power as always 'possessed by the coloniser' (OQ, 200). For Bhabha, this leaves too little space for resistance.

Actually, the disagreement is deeper than this. Saïd mainly discusses colonisers using colonial discourse to construct and dominate colonised people. He sometimes implies that the colonised themselves exist in forms irreducible to this construction, and sometimes that they are effects of colonial discourse. For Bhabha, in contrast, colonial discourse

always fails. It is constructed from an array of conflicting positions, including that of the colonised. I would argue that the disagreement between Saïd and Bhabha is mainly a disagreement between Foucauldian and Lacanian/Derridean varieties of poststructuralism. On the one hand, colonialism is more total for Bhabha than for Said. There is no residue of a self misrepresented in colonial discourse in Bhabha, whereas there is such a residue in Saïd. On the other hand, Saïd treats colonial discourse as more of a coherent discourse than Bhabha does. Bhabha believes strongly in the ambiguity of every text, and applies this in his analysis of colonialism. In contrast, Saïd treats colonialism as a largely coherent (though tautological and self-referential) episteme, or regime of knowledge. This means that Saïd explains resistance by reference to other discourses outside the colonial text, whereas Bhabha explains resistance through ambiguity within the colonial text.

Colonialism as Fetishism

Bhabha thus sees stereotypical images as sites of psychoanalytic knots. A stereotype is a scene of fetishism, or the disavowal of difference. It is also the scene where a primal fantasy operates (LC, 75). It is the primary point of identification for both coloniser and colonised (LC, 75). Its structure is basically perverse. It at once acknowledges and denies

an important but uncomfortable truth – in this case, cultural difference. On the one hand, we are all the same, there is no racial difference; on the other, colonials are inscrutable and absolutely different. As a type of fantasy, fetishism articulates the impossible desire for pure origins or identity (LC, 81). It is a site at which the basic issues of identity-formation play out. For Bhabha, it is tied up with the 'scopic drive', which refers to a libidinal investment or quasi-sexual pleasure in seeing and looking – for example, voyeurism and exhibitionism (LC, 76). It is because of the scopic aspect of colonialism that skin colour and lightness/darkness metaphors took on such significance (LC, 82). Colonialism thus operates on a psychoanalytic model. However, it is subtly different. Unlike sexual fetishes, the racial fetish is not secret (Byrne, 2009:81). The meanings attached to skin colour are important as a way of socially constructing a constantly visible sign of race (LC, 79-80).

Bhabha articulates this theory of fetishism in psychoanalytic terms, based largely on Lacan. Fetishism does not rely on psychological repression. Instead, it combines two contradictory beliefs. These are typically an archaic myth of origins and a progressive belief which allows for difference and division (LC, 80). This combined, contradictory belief serves as a defence-mechanism against reality. According to Bhabha, this kind of fetishism involves a split idea, rather than a split affect/emotion (LC, 132). Such fetishism recognises in advance the possibility of disruption. The scopic drive can be disrupted when the other returns the look. Identification is thus haunted by the double (LC, 81). The national ego seeks to see its double in the mirror. Instead, it sees 'unchosen' 'non-people' who are similar but not the same (ANNS, 207). In Lacanian theory, disavowal is the typical mechanism of fetishism. Disavowal combines a 'narcissistic demand', in which the world is reduced to the self and its interests, with a partial acknowledgement of difference (LC, 115). It combines in one symbol the recognition of reality and a kind of wishful thinking. The fetishised object is both a substitute for what is lacking and an acknowledgement of the lack (LC, 115). It allows for a narcissistic identification (in the Lacanian sense) of the self with an 'ideal ego' which is good and whole (LC, 76). This kind of identification denies the co-constitutivity of self and other.

The scopic drive is a type of psychoanalytic drive associated with the eye and the gaze. It plays an important part in Lacan's theory. It is similar to the drives – such as the oral drive and the anal drive – theorised by Freud. These are sexual drives directed towards a partial object, a body part treated as distinct from a full person. Drives cannot be satisfied. But they produce pleasure or meaning in the way they circle around their object. The scopic drive begins with the sense of being seen. Because they are seen by others, the person experiences themself as an object. They identify as the object of the other's desire. But this alienates people from themselves. The scopic drive is important to the formation of personal identity in the mirror stage. The gaze is the source of interpellation (see above, 93-5). Crucially, the gaze is reversible. People are never purely objects, but can gaze back. There is also an invocatory drive, focused on voice. This might be important in understanding the structure of desire in Bhabha's own work.

Colonial discourse is split, in line with the theory of fetishism. On the one hand, it considers reality. On the other, it 'disavows' reality and replaces it with what it desires (LC, 91). Two contradictory and independent attitudes – accepting and denying reality – exist in the same space (LC, 132). This leads to a corresponding split between positive and negative stereotypes – for example, loyal African servants and evil savages (LC, 79). Colonialism oscillates between seeing the colonised as *mimic* – almost the same but not quite – and *menace* – almost absolutely different, but not quite (LC, 91). The good stereotype is a pole of sexual attraction. The bad stereotype is a locus of racial fear (LC, 78-9). The colonised, as ambiguous object of desire, is the founding object of the western world (LC, 92), akin to the Lacanian *objet petit a* which is the imagined source of individual desire. Colonialism posits an either/or choice: civilisation or chaos. But it also maintains the necessity for both at once (LC, 133). This contradiction provides the space in which colonialism can collapse through its own ambiguity. It also provides a space for the forms of resistance which contribute to this collapse. Bhabha calls stereotypes 'fourfold'. They have two colonial aspects, the narcissistic positive aspect and the aggressive/paranoiac negative aspect. And they have two resistant aspects, the return of the gaze by the colonised and the mirror which reflects yet distorts the image of the self (LC, 81). The scopic drive is frustrated when the other ceases to be an object and stares back. The construction of a self-image is frustrated when the mirror returns the image in a distorted form.

It is in the context of this internal ambiguity that the most famous part of Bhabha's theory – his account of hybridity and mimicry – gains its political meaning. Hybridity is discussed in more detail above (347-55). Here, it is important to emphasise that, for Bhabha, hybridity is subversive because it exploits the self-contradictory nature of colonial discourse. Hybridity displays the displacement and deformation involved in colonial domination (LC, 112). It makes visible the process which colonial power necessarily disavows. It reverses the process of disavowal, making the contradiction impossible to deny. It also reveals the denied knowledges of the colonised. This estranges the basis of colonial authority, which is framed as a situation of 'recognition', or the relation of coloniser to colonised (LC, 114). Instead of such recognition, there is juxtaposition of ambivalent positions. This puts a spanner in the works of the colonial fantasy.

According to Bhabha, hybridity is a 'partial desire' which can transform the colonial space. It displaces texts from 'symbol' to 'sign' (LC, 115) – from outer representation and command, to the space of displacement and deformation. Either colonial knowledge is articulated with local knowledges so as to survive in this space, or it is confronted with colonised subjects it must rule but cannot represent. In either case, hybridity leads to questions colonial authority cannot answer (LC, 115). Hybridity undermines the rigid boundaries which allow power to work. Discrimination allows colonisers to watch the colonised. But, proliferating differences and hybridities allow the colonised to escape this surveillance (LC, 112). The scopic gaze which establishes control begins to break down.

The look of surveillance is returned as a 'displacing gaze' (LC, 89). This is built into the functioning of colonialism itself. For Bhabha, colonial power does not function mainly by 'noisy command' or repression of native traditions. It functions mainly by producing hybridity. It is therefore complicit in the subversion of its own authority (LC, 112).

Repression and violence are explained as effects of this subversion. Hybridity triggers the paranoid pole of colonial identity. It interrupts the voice of power with unanswerable questions. Colonial power can only engage with these questions by constantly re-establishing power, representing it anew, and creating new authoritative representations. This is a process of constantly recreating fear and terror. Paranoia restores some minimal degree of power. But for Bhabha, the threat of ambivalence to colonial meaning is ultimately uncontainable. It decisively breaks down the self-other binary, and thus disrupts the productivity of colonial power, causing it to stop functioning (LC, 116).

While colonisers try to maintain control through paranoid means, resistance is empowered by ambivalence. The colonial subject, like every subject, is constitutively split. Strategies of resistance disarticulate this subject at the point of splitting (TT, 32). For the colonised – especially the *évolué*, the elite colonised person who aspires to be like the

coloniser – the experience of colonialism is an experience of a split identity (LC, 44). A doctor like Fanon, for instance, is at once a doctor like the white doctors, and somehow different. Bhabha calls this difference *not quite/not white*. This split identity makes it impossible for the colonised to accept the identity they are assigned by colonialism (LC, 44). Mimicry produces a continual slippage or excess within colonial identity, stemming from this status of being 'not quite' (LC, 86). Mimicry is always ambivalent between self and other – the same, but not quite. It is like the image of the self in the mirror, which is important in Lacan's theory of the mirror stage. Cities like Mumbai/Bombay are actively hybridised in a way which makes English cities seem provincial (PN3, 69).

Bhabha's concept of mimicry is based on Lacan's concept of camouflage, which involves disguising oneself by becoming mottled against a mottled background (RA, 62-3). It has been read as involving exaggerated, almost parodic imitation – such as when a group repeats ethnic jokes about itself (Huddart, 2006:35). It is an attempt to resolve the paradox of identity caused by colonialism. Since neither colonised nor coloniser has a real identity, the mimic is not copying something authentic, or betraying her/his real identity. Mimicry was practiced, for instance, by an elite class of Indians with English beliefs and habits (LC, 87). Yet to be Anglicised in this way was emphatically not to be English, because of the racialised nature of colonial power (LC, 87). There was often an ironic desire to become authentic through mimicry. Mimicry is a mask, but it does not conceal anything behind the mask (LC, 88). It may not have been intended to subvert, but the structure of colonial power made mimicry subversive nonetheless.

Mimicry is subversive because it breaks down the racial hierarchies on which colonial power rests. It causes colonial discourse to slip out of the control of the colonisers. Mimics become figures of menace to the coloniser, even when they do not actively resist. For Bhabha, therefore, mimicry is disruptive of colonial power. It exposes the ambivalence of colonial discourse – the contradictory demands on the colonised to remain stereotypical savages, but also to become English (or French, Portuguese, etc).

Mimics are both good and bad subjects of colonial power. By exposing this ambiguity, mimicry disrupts colonial authority (LC, 88). Mimicry is a strategy of colonial power. But it also has 'insurgent' appeal for the colonised (LC, 91). It causes the collapse of both political (or bodily) and textual (or representational) authority (LC, 92). The mimic is able to return the colonial gaze and disrupt the scopic drive (LC, 89).

This process of subversion undermines the separations on which colonialism depends. Colonialism relies on Manichean binaries. But these binaries can be shifted through a 'trajectory of colonial desire' associated with the 'tethered shadow', or the double (LC, 62). Manichean categories break down because the colonised, as imitator, is constitutive of the colonial self (see above, 357-364). One does not, as Fanon argued, have to 'turn white or disappear'. There is a third choice of hybridity and mimicry (LC, 120). This third choice is also a form of resistance. Hybridity is a 'warlike, subaltern sign of the native' which dispossesses the master of his own words (LC, 121). Hybrid readings not only alter what is said, but challenge the very reality constructed by the words they reshape (LC, 121). As

suggested above, the position of a colonised person is sometimes disavowed, or denied. This disavowal creates the conditions for colonised people to take revenge through mimicry or imitation (LC, 56). Such resistance does not seek to 'unveil the fullness of Man', but to 'manipulate his representation' (LC, 62). In other words, it disrupts representational categories so as to undermine (rather than appropriate) claims to universality. According to Xie, the split in subject-formation undermines western discourse. It disrupts dominant representations. It also disrupts the 'unity of the Western nation itself' (1996:158). Because the nation is founded on its other, the disruption of the binary destroys or opens up its subjectivity.

Such approaches of hybridising and mimicking colonial discourse are Bhabha's preferred forms of resistance. They are emphasised instead of tactics such as Gandhian passive resistance, armed struggle, or strikes. For Bhabha, anti-colonial resistance is resistance *inside* colonialism. It involves the production of hybridities and local receptions of colonial texts which subvert the fixity of colonial power and undermine its disavowal. They make the contradiction on which colonialism is founded too visible to be denied. Colonised people present versions of the colonial enunciation (or spoken word) which are different from and threatening to the enunciation's colonial meaning. Sometimes they combine colonial ideas with local knowledges and beliefs. Sometimes they take on part, but not all, of a colonial discourse. Sometimes they combine multiple, contradictory beliefs in syncretic ways (LC, 120). Resistance does not arise adversarially, from antagonism, or from the outside. Instead, it emerges along the 'boundary of authorization' (LC, 109) – the points where colonised and coloniser intersect, and textual authority is constructed. These are points where, in normal discourse, the appearance of transparency would create a reality-effect. In colonial discourse, the colonised subject resists. The colonial statement is never 'authorised' or rendered legitimate. Hence, the reality-effect fails to appear. This subverts the functioning of colonialism.

Bhabha's analysis leads to difficulties interpreting anti-colonial movements. If resistance is actually all about ambiguity and textual subversion, why did movements which used antagonistic, Manichean discourses sometimes succeed? For Bhabha, they succeeded because they were also ultimately hybrid. The liberatory people, who revolt against colonialism, are hybrid people who destabilise colonial categories. They are able to to switch between western and traditional cultural forms for strategic purposes. They thereby turn the site of colonial meanings into a site of liberatory signs of future possibilities (LC, 38). However, Bhabha also argues that anti-colonial movements were too binarising. Instead of a binary of coloniser and colonised, he seeks recognition of complexity (LC, 173). Bhabha seems to contradict himself here. He argues that colonial movements succeeded because they were not binarising, but at the same time, that they were too binarising and therefore unsuccessful. He would probably resolve this contradiction by claiming that these movements included both manifest (binarising) and latent (non-binarising) aspects, and that it was the latent aspects which explain their success.

Reading the anti-colonial psychologist and activist Frantz Fanon's work, Bhabha argues that Fanon's revolutionary vision stems from his awareness that the state of exception is the norm. He draws on Benjamin (1940) here (see also Robinson, 2013). For Fanon, this state of emergency is also a state of *emergence* (LC, 41), of the appearance of something new. This seems rather a misreading of the texts in question. When Benjamin uses this concept, he indicts capitalism and the state for reproducing permanent emergency. The affect (or emotion) Benjamin associates with this state is a sense of disaster, which is also a sense of the urgency of revolution. In contrast, Bhabha portrays the state of emergency

as something ontologically foundational. He relates to it as something one should accept and sublimate. As so often in deconstructive texts, famous authors are re-read as alter egos of the present author, as closet Derrideans. One danger in this approach is that it renders it increasingly difficult to recognise and situate oneself in relation to any position other than one's own. If everything is already Derridean, then Derridean theory can neither name itself, nor recognise any adversaries. It is always-already everything. This is a dangerous position for a scholar to hold. For more on Bhabha's critique of Fanon, see below (861-882).

Sly Civility and Everyday Resistance

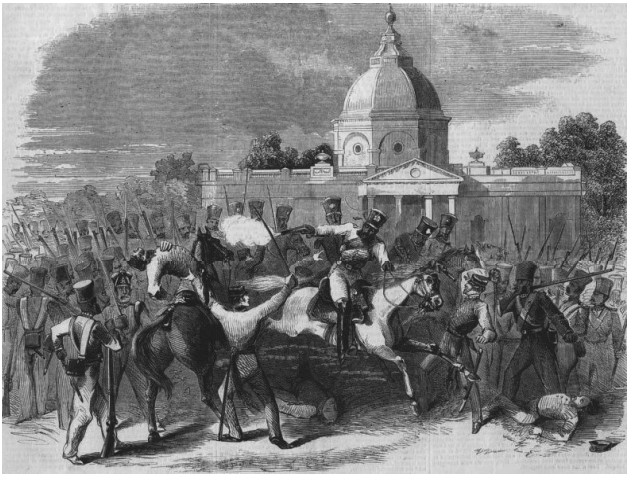
Returning to the question of anti-colonial resistance, Bhabha also discusses a process which feigns civility or civilisation. 'Sly civility' is Bhabha's term for a style of anti-colonial or bottom-up resistance which involves publicly displaying conformity while quietly redefining or inflecting the terms of the dominant discourse to which one conforms. It is taken from a sermon by a British archbishop in 1818, who use the term to refer to a way people resist colonial arguments (LC, 99). Colonised subjects acquiesce and repeat what the colonised say. But they re-inflect it in ways which subvert it (LC, 233).

Bhabha's account of 'sly civility' is similar to accounts of peasant resistance in the work of James Scott (1987, 1990) and Ranajit Guha (1997/1983). All these accounts recognise that peasants strategically adopt dominant social discourses or 'transcripts' deployed by elites, and reconfigure them subtly, to express peasants' desires or interests. Similar phenomena are also revealed in histories of slavery (Raboteau, 1978), the history of everyday life in Nazi Germany (Grunberger, 1971; Peukert, 1987/1982) and Soviet Russia (Kotkin, 1995), accounts of medieval millenarian movements (Vaneigem, 1998), and accounts of delinquency in America (Matza, 1967). It also appears in other research on colonised peoples, such as the Kwaio (Keesing, 1992). The B'rer Rabbit stories involve the use of tricks to outwit the powerful. An Ethiopian saying, 'When the great lord passes, the peasants bow deeply and silently fart' carries similar connotations. And Irish peasants reportedly addressed English overlords with a local dialect insult which sounded like they were mispronouncing "Sir". Although the term 'sly civility' is rarely used, it is perhaps the one concept from Bhabha's corpus with the widest resonance in the empirical literature on resistance. However, the political significance of 'sly civility' is different in each case. Many of the other scholars who use the concept (if not the term) see 'sly civility' as an inauthentic front, which oppressed groups use to maintain a boundary behind which an autonomous discourse maintains some scope. Bhabha is unusual in seeing it as a more-or-less honest, but partial, identification with colonial discourse.

For Bhabha, sly civility (and also hybridity) involves a refusal to return and restore colonial authority. It moves colonial power from its 'narcissist' (self-confident, proud) pole to its 'paranoid' pole of fearing hatred and persecution of the coloniser by the colonised (LC, 100, 113). The coloniser demands from the colonised a reciprocal gesture, a reciprocation which validates colonial knowledge as truth, or power as love. The colonised refuses this gesture (LC, 100). The failure to receive a reply leads to anxiety. This anxiety cannot abate, because it is connected to the emptiness of the 'third space', the space where the speaker meets the linguistic "I", or the actual self meets the mirrored self (LC, 101). In colonial

discourse, paranoia shuts off access to the third space. This space is always occupied by stereotypes and fixed images (for instance, the colonised as barbarians).

The reality-effect of ordinary discourse stems from an image of transparency. In Lacanian theory, this appearance is illusory. Nevertheless, it is sustained through an experience of discursive transparency or complementarity (LC, 109). In other words, the fact that people seem to mean the same things when they speak creates the illusion that discourse is extra-discursive or true. This experience of transparency is permanently lacking in colonial discourse. It is frustrated by 'sly civility', incommensurability, mimicry, hybridity, time-lag, and so on.



Everyday resistance is also considered to take ambiguous forms. In the piece 'By Bread Alone', Bhabha reconstructs an episode of anti-colonial resistance in India. He focuses on a particular incident in which peasants circulated chapatis between villages (LC, 199-200). “Circulation”, in Bhabha's language, refers to the movement of signs which are actually symbols, and not part of the normal functioning of language. This incident accompanied the 'Indian Mutiny' (also known as the Indian Revolt or the first war of independence) and inspired emotional arousal among both peasants and colonial administrators. For colonisers, it was a moment of panic because the symbols could not be understood. For Bhabha, this episode shows that panic is a strategic affect of revolt. Obscure, enigmatic

symbols are an effective way to revolt, because they produce uncertainty. Panic is useful for guerrilla warfare and social agency. It binds the colonised to each other and to the colonisers (LC, 203). It creates a hybrid space of cultural difference (LC, 204). It is primarily a means to transmit fear, anxiety, projection and panic between coloniser and colonised (LC, 206). It is one of the means by which 'truth without subjectivity', or the intersubjective field of the Imaginary (see above, 214-15, 326), enters into language (LC, 199). The speed of panic is sufficient to break up binary constructions. Bhabha bases his theory on psychoanalyst Wilfrid Bion's claim that panic and anger are interchangeable, and occur outside the functions which form social groups (LC, 206).

The "Mutiny" ultimately failed, with vicious reprisals by the colonisers. But for Bhabha, it was successful because of its discursive effects. In political terms, Bhabha concedes authoritarian arguments that the rebellion failed because it lacked leadership and discipline. However, he argues that its subversive impact was effective on a different level, in destabilising hierarchies (LC, 208). The rebels marched on Delhi to provide an 'affective focus' and public political visibility (LC, 209). This in turn allowed them to insert hybrid symbols, such as rearranged military uniforms, in the site of power (LC, 211). In other words, according to Bhabha, it doesn't really matter that the revolt was militarily crushed. It disrupted the functioning of discursive power, and thus counts as a case of effective resistance. Although his account depends on the chapatis as meaningless or of unknowable meaning, Bhabha also paradoxically interprets their meaning. They stand for experiences of displacement due to class levelling by the colonisers (LC, 202-3). This argument, paradoxically, renders the revolt rather reactionary in class terms, though Bhabha presumably does not intend this. Bhabha is also confident throughout that the rebels conceived the revolt in strategic, guerrilla terms, so that the circulation of chapatis can be read as agency in Bhabha's sense (LC, 204). The chapatis circulate as signs of the unknowable, create reversibility between Indian and English affects, and thus spread panic among the colonisers (LC, 207). Insurgents and loyalists became two sides of the same subject (LC, 208).

An alternative reading (which Scott and Guha would probably advance) would be that the chapatis had a definite meaning for peasants. Colonisers could not understand this hidden meaning, and this is why they panicked. The meaning may also be hidden from later readers because colonisers wrote the histories. (Various theories, such as chapatis as a symbol of a threat to subsistence or as customary warnings of sickness, were advanced at the time). Bhabha denounces this reading as downplaying its hybridity and its effect in creating a 'war of nerves' (LC, 204). The chapatis were effective because they made meaning indeterminate. They switched the temporality, or timezone, of the situation from the 'customary and commonplace' to the 'archaic, awesome, terrifying' (LC, 202). In other words, they took the entire society into the liminal zone which for Bhabha, is where change is possible. It was not just colonisers who were taken into this zone of uncertainty. It was also the people who were themselves circulating the ambivalent signs. Similarly, he elsewhere criticises the 'misread[ing]' of doubleness as 'the duplicitous utterance of slave and native' (OF, 181). Subaltern speech is not hybrid because it uses trickery against power. It is hybrid because it internally subverts the self-other division.

CHAPTER 8

Critique and Analysis:
Bhabha, Everyday Resistance, and Social Movements

Bhabha's approach to ambiguity is relevant to resistance to power. There are many cases where a population might make itself "illegible" or ambivalent so as to resist power. Think for instance of the difficulties states have in counting populations. Many people, especially in poor countries, either stay off the census to avoid political control (or taxes, or the draft), or else create multiple identities to access resources (such as the 'ghost' bureaucrats and soldiers often found on African state payrolls). There might be a national military draft, or a national ID card, but anything from 10% to 80% of the population evade it. Or people might live in informal settlements with no legal identity. They do not appear on maps, there are no official land titles, but the settlements are relatively permanent. There are also various phenomena which are usually depicted as 'state failure', such as corruption, inability to enforce laws, lack of control of parts of their territories. And there are the structures termed 'neopatrimonial' in the development literature. For example, states are captured by shadowy extra-state elites, or rely on local chiefs/warlords/strongmen to maintain power. These are indications that the state's representational or textual power often breaks down in former colonies.

Similarly, social movements might maintain a legitimate above-ground organisation which carefully avoids illegality, public hostility or institutional exclusion, and a clandestine branch which pursues more militant actions. We might think here of leftist 'front' organisations, or the political 'wings' of armed organisations, or 'entryism'. There are similar situations in legal settings, where people strategically alter representations. For example, people on trial for protests might minimise the radicalism of their politics in court, and pose as conscientious liberals. However, such practices do not generally entail the deep ambiguity and complicity in the adopted identity which Bhabha assumes. If for

instance someone is an anarchist or a Marxist in their political convictions, but they present themselves in court as a democratic liberal concerned about social justice, there is an ambiguity of sorts in their position. But there is also a sense in which the person would feel her/himself to be *really* one or the other – in this case, *really* a radical pretending to be a liberal. There is something disturbingly cynical in the assumption that *all* social discourse is of this type (even if only unconsciously so). It tends to make dissimulation not so much a temporary compromise in adverse conditions as a permanent discursive position.

Another problem is that the destruction of meaning is not necessarily the same as the destruction of domination. The destruction of meaning can also lead to the destruction of dialogue, and of forms of creative or productive power which are necessary for the colonised. Power/knowledge is not just a matter of domination. It can also involve creative "power-to", cooperative "power-with", and/or bottom-up power to resist. The subversion of meaning seems ultimately to lead to a wasteland for both sides. In Bhabha's account, the colonised successfully frustrate the desire of the colonisers to impose their own order. But they seem to simultaneously subvert any possibility of creating different meanings or getting rid of the system they have subverted. Instead, they end up with a dystopian world where nobody can communicate, where everything is dissimulated.

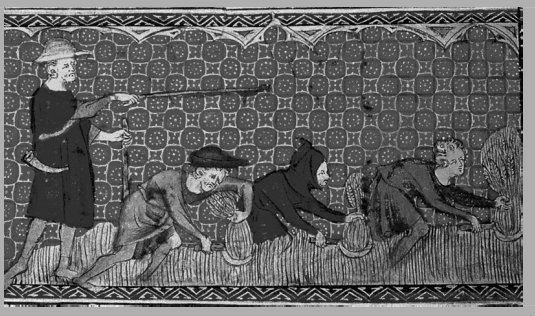
Take an example from the Chinese Great Leap Forward. Peasants lied about how much food they produced, so as to avoid being punished for producing too little. As a result, the government was confused about how much food there was in the country. Such lying disrupted meaning for the government, and made the peasants ungovernable. But the cost of this ungovernability, for the peasants, was widespread famine. Nobody knew until it was too late that too little food had been grown. The same might be said for many of the effects of so-called state failure and neopatrimonialism. Some of these are empowering for oppressed people. Others simply lead to endless civil wars, lack of social services and everyday safety, and the empowerment of mafia-like elites. Or one might think about the post-9/11 context. Colonial resistance has blasted the coloniser out of a "narcissist", self-

assured stance and into a "paranoid" stance. The world seems less certain and less safe than it was before. But, for the oppressed, this means intensified persecution by a terrified, paranoid state (see Karatzogianni and Robinson, 2017). This situation has so far led to endless war, racial profiling and resultant violence (Swanton, 2010), intensified militarisation of the police, securitisation of migration (see Bigo, 2002), torture, killings, and other atrocities. The end-point of this paranoid response may be a cybernetic dictatorship foreshadowed by China's planned social credit system. Cybernetic control may be used to shut down trajectories of social change to maintain bubbles of stability (Invisible Committee, 2015), in an endless conservative paranoiac repetition similar to Tokugawa-era Japan. This is not what Bhabha has in mind, but it shows that generalised conversion of "narcissism" into "paranoia" is unlikely to help the oppressed (c.f. below, 958-62).

Ultimately, a social world based on dissimulation and "mimicry", or strategic reinterpretation, is doomed to collapse. Dissimulated meaning is possible only because it is parasitic on an assumption of direct, honest communication. If such honest communication disappears – or if, as Derrida believes, it is constitutively impossible – then the effect is not a free play of discourse. The effect is that all discourse loses its power to "mean", its symbolic power. The reality-effect collapses. One's sense of safety collapses. Social relationships become tainted with generalised paranoia and anxiety. It is not clear that such a loss of meaning-effects is politically or socially progressive. Rather, it may have effects of sapping vital energies from life. The permanent passive revolution enacted unsuccessfully by "failed" states which have not managed to produce reality-effects, and instead keep resorting to paranoid acting-out, is arguably definitive of "Third World" politics after decolonisation. This condition is increasingly also occurring in the west, due to neoliberal precarity and global structural malaise.

It also raises the costs of communication enormously. Without meaning-effects, "transparency", background assumptions, bracketing-out or black-boxing parts of discourse, communication is very hard work (much like reading Bhabha's texts). It may be worth it if it really destroys hierarchical power, but it is not clear that it does. It may not be a coincidence that the generalised strategic/dissimulatory discourse proposed by Bhabha is similar to the effects of public relations, spindoctoring, style-over-substance, simulation, "fake news" and so on, within neoliberal discourse. Neoliberalism is based on precariousness, an intensification of the denial or conditionalising of meaning, referred to by Guattari and Negri as a 'hell of the absence of guarantees' (Guattari and Negri, 1990:76; c.f. IPC, 2014; Berardi, 2009; Baudrillard, 1994). A generalised "strategic" or pragmatic discourse, and a corresponding abandonment of meaning-effects and truth-claims, may be extremely functional for a form of capitalism based on simulation. It precludes any necessity to engage with invisible depth-phenomena – use-value, labour, desire, the unconscious, symbolic exchange – which cannot be observed cybernetically.

In the Margins: James C. Scott and everyday resistance



James C. Scott is an anarchist-influenced ethnographer who has written a series of books dealing with the relationship between popular resistance and the state. His fieldwork in a Malaysian village is recounted in his book *Weapons of the Weak* (1987). Here, he pioneers the concept of 'hidden transcripts' which is later expanded in his book *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (1990). In contrast with Marxist accounts of false consciousness, Scott shows that peasants are often very aware of their oppression. However, they only show this awareness in hidden, 'offstage' spaces. His article series 'Protest and Profanation' (1977a, 1977b) shows the relationship between peasant protest and everyday religion. Scott suggests that a 'little tradition' of peasant religion, often with animist or polytheist elements, is usually attached to the 'great traditions' of famous religions. This 'little tradition' appears forcefully in moments of revolt. In *The Moral Economy of the Peasant* (1979), Scott argues that historical peasant revolts in Southeast Asia have usually been caused by high taxes and food shortages. Peasants value the maintenance of a subsistence minimum for everyone, as the main economic good. They therefore tolerate high taxes in periods of plenty. But demands which eat into their baseline in periods of scarcity are enough to trigger insurrection.

In *Seeing like a State* (1998), Scott contrasts the flexible everyday knowledge, or 'metis', of subaltern people to the overarching plans and simplifications of modernist states. He argues that states seek to make social life 'legible'

or comprehensible in their own, top-down terms. This leads to disaster as it makes social systems less responsive to local conditions. It also oppresses people who don't fit into the general plan. In *The Art of Not Being Governed* (2009), Scott surveys the strategies of evasion and resistance used in upland Southeast Asia – an area he terms Zomia. He argues that Zomians have historically evaded control using terrain complexity and other means to frustrate legibility. In *Two Cheers for Anarchism* (2012), Scott argues for an anarchistic lens, but without a rigid theoretical framework. His most recent book, *Against the Grain* (2017), argues that early societies avoided settling down so as to live more freely and happily. The rise of settled agriculture was actually a worsening of the human condition.

B'rer Rabbit, slave trickster

The most relevant aspect of Scott's work in relation to Bhabha is his theory of everyday resistance. Scott's theory is based on the findings of his own fieldwork – though he believes it is a longstanding part of folk wisdom. It is driven by evidence, rather than theory. According to Scott, people do not consent to be dominated, or submit due to false consciousness. They generally submit out of strategic weakness, and only to the minimum degree necessary. Oppressed people tend to resent humiliation, taking orders, and the indignities of power, not simply inequality or exploitation. The denial of human dignity, and of the right to reciprocate insults, is a bigger sore spot than economic inequality. Oppressed people rarely accept their subordination or marginalisation, or the belief that they are inferior. There is sociological and psychological evidence that domination and coercion produce hostility, bitterness and nonconformity, even if they produce superficial compliance.

As a result, societies of domination – including colonial societies – are also societies of constant political struggle. There is a constant field of struggle which Scott terms "***infrapolitics***". This type of politics happens in everyday life, mostly invisibly. As in Bhabha, it involves a constant, largely invisible strategic struggle. In this struggle, oppressed people try to push the boundaries of their freedom out further. Oppressive elites seek to contain or roll back these attempts. Limits are constantly tested in both directions. Any ground left undefended is likely to be lost. Laws which are not enforced will quickly be broken. Discretionary powers which are not exercised arbitrarily will turn into customary rights. The strategic stance of oppressed people involves 'an experimental spirit and a capacity to test and exploit all the loopholes, ambiguities, silences, and lapses available to them... setting a course at the very perimeter of what the authorities are obliged to permit or unable to prevent' (1990:138-9).

Most resistance is small-scale, localised, and happens in everyday life. However, its effects can be cumulative, leading to the collapse of big political projects. Massive desertion or draft dodging, tax evasion, or flight, for example, can undermine political policies. Indeed, Scott believes that most social changes result from infrapolitical processes. Infrapolitics tends to be a struggle of attrition. It is leaderless, and often disavowed. However, it is more-or-less conscious and involves structures, albeit hidden ones. Oppressed people lead a kind of double life. They consciously suppress outward displays of their resentment and anger towards the elite and the dominant system, and assertions of dignity. However, they express such feelings in hidden ways. Dissimulation is absolutely central to the everyday politics of the oppressed. In Scott's model, oppressed people mainly

dissimulate to oppressors or elites. They do not necessarily dissimulate amongst themselves, and a society which is not based on domination will not involve these kinds of dissimulation.

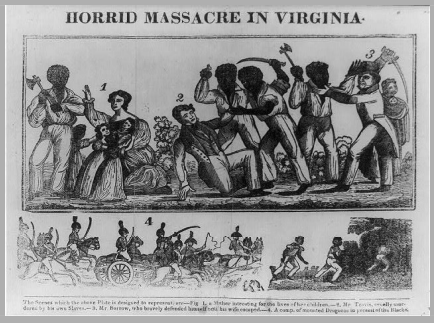
According to Scott, oppressed people engage in constant resistance, but disguise it in various ways – as conformity, as apolitical action, as stupidity, and so on. Stereotypes might be exploited or cultivated: if peasants are viewed as stupid and lazy, their resistance will be mistaken for inherent incapacity. Most actions conceal either the message or the messenger. Sometimes, they leave so little trace that the very action is concealed. Scott discusses a wide array of means of concealment: limitations to top-down surveillance, the use of darkness or terrain complexity, evasion of imposed duties (such as taxes and forced labour), foot-dragging, informal withdrawal of labour, flight to uncontrolled regions, anonymous statements and actions, ostracism, spreading rumours or gossip, various kinds of theft and sabotage, etc. Cultural beliefs may form part of these strategies. For example, ideas such as hysteria and spirit possession can be used to avoid responsibility for defiance. Carnival provides a similar cover.

Oppressed people seeking to avoid repression usually disguise either the message or the messenger. This sometimes involves anonymity. People might spread rumours of imminent disaster or liberation, which could spark revolts. They might post anonymous threats to oppressors. "Mob" protests can either be leaderless and spontaneous, or be made to appear so. Conformity may be overdone to the point of parody, or inflected with a hostile tone or gaze. Oral culture serves as a good disguise as it is anonymous and open to multiple meanings. Subversive ideas can also be

dressed up in dominant cultural forms. For example, slaves in a Christian society might conceal radical claims beneath songs or stories about the Exodus or the Second Coming. Folk culture might involve symbolic inversions, such as those of a "world turned upside down", or celebrate tricksters who outwit stronger adversaries (like Robin Hood and B'rer Rabbit). This repertoire involves both overtly hostile acts which disguise the actor, and acts which disguise their hostile character or give plausible deniability. Some of Scott's examples come from colonial contexts. Colonised Burmese would shout insults from a safe distance, spit on the delicate clothes of Europeans, and trip them up. Laotian hill villagers created a whole elaborate charade of fake village officials to fool the colonisers. Other examples come from medieval Europe, totalitarian states, postcolonial dictatorships and patrimonial states, slave and caste systems, and even from workplaces and families.

According to Scott, oppressed groups typically have a "***hidden transcript***". This is an account of the world, a worldview, which is articulated only in hidden spaces. It involves claims to dignity and rights, and barely suppressed anger, which are not expressed in public. In Scott's terms, it is performed "offstage" or "backstage", where the oppressive elite cannot see it. It is expressed in social milieus of trusted people, and spaces where top-down surveillance is weakest. For example, hidden transcript discourse often takes place in isolated geographical sites such as thickets or gullies. Alternatively, it may occur in spaces belonging to subaltern groups, such as taverns or markets. It generally would not appear in the colonial archive because it is too well-hidden. This leads to a misleading impression among colonisers that revolts and exceptional acts of resistance come from nowhere, unpredictably.

Oppressed people usually see the hidden transcript as their authentic worldview. It is usually directly oppositional towards the elite and the public transcript. Its implications are revolutionary. For example, slaves typically seek the abolition of slavery and vengeance against the masters. Peasants seek an end to landlords and taxes. "Backstage" talk also encourages and rationalises infrapolitical resistance. For example, peasants who poach (or steal) from royal forests believe they are enacting customary forest rights. Hidden transcript performances are a kind of social text – but a text with a limited audience. The dominant group are deliberately excluded from the hidden transcript. However, Scott suggests that elites also have hidden transcripts to some degree. They conceal aspects of their infrapolitical agenda from those they oppress.



Hidden transcripts depend on horizontal connections between oppressed people, beyond the gaze of the powerful. They are thus a focus of infrapolitical struggles, as well as a source of these struggles. Rulers often try to penetrate or ban hidden transcript spaces. They seek to atomise oppressed groups and establish purely dyadic (one-to-one) relationships with each oppressed person. The more atomised people are, and the more they are subject to surveillance, the less able they are to articulate hidden transcripts. In extreme contexts, this leads to effects similar to Stockholm Syndrome – people are so isolated that they succumb to psychological control. These are the only circumstances where Scott believes that significant false consciousness arises. Usually, however, oppressed people create enough horizontal connections to maintain a hidden transcript even in the harshest regimes.

There is also a "***public transcript***". This is the dominant script which is performed in social spaces where oppressed people interact with their oppressors. It is usually constructed mainly from the oppressor's point of view. But, it can also involve concessions made to oppressed groups (formal rights, *noblesse oblige*, norms of good rulership, etc). It includes legitimacy-claims about the existing regime, and performances enacted to support these claims. It is used to minimise the need to use force to maintain domination, and it helps to convince the elite of their own legitimacy. For example, in a colonial context, the public transcript will recognise the legitimacy of colonialism. It has faultlines similar to Bhabha's idea of ambiguity. According to Scott, a public transcript always hides the 'dirty linen' of an oppressive society (1990:103). There are particular acts which repudiate or undermine it, by putting the 'dirty linen' on display. Acts by the elite which publicly defy their claimed basis for legitimacy are thus dangerous. Often, "everyone knows" the public transcript isn't true. Its function is to keep up appearances, not to convince. The point is to sustain symbolic affirmation of the powerful by the oppressed, including humility or humiliation. Any denial of such humility shows that power is simply tyranny. Its role is to keep up an illusion of social peace which produces an uneasy coexistence. Unlike Bhabha, Scott sees it as subversive to take the elite at their word, to require them to perform consistently the norms they claim to uphold, even when this helps the worse-off and undermines their power. It is usually in the literal word of the public transcript, not its strategic use, that the elite make concessions which can be leveraged.

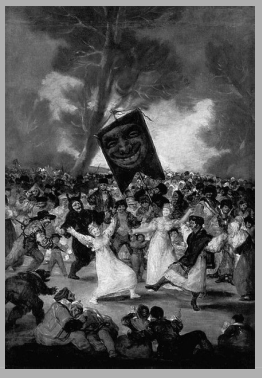
Oppressed people interact with the public transcript out of necessity, or to get what they want. Their approach to it is extractive and instrumental.

They generally don't just submit to it passively. They re-read it in ways which help them. Using the public transcript to articulate claims is often effective for everything short of revolutionary goals. For example, oppressed people often infer enforceable rights from the public transcript. The elite may present itself as meeting certain social needs, and oppressed people will take this to mean that, should they fail to meet these needs, they can be overthrown. The conversion of legitimacy-claims into rights involves an implied "or else" (1990:95). This turns every legitimacy-claim made by an

elite into a vulnerability. If for example a king declares that royal benevolence justifies the regime, peasants will reinterpret this to mean that an insufficiently benevolent king is not the true king. In their practices within the public transcript, oppressed people exploit 'loopholes, ambiguities, silences and lapses' to insert concealed or ambivalent meanings which point towards the hidden transcript for those in the know (1990:138-9). Hence, a constant historical argument takes place in veiled form between elite and oppressed groups within the public transcript.

Similarly, when folk culture is presented to a mixed audience, it is often open to dual readings. One reading is innocuous, the other revolutionary. An example is the B'rer Rabbit stories, which were told by enslaved African-Americans. On one level they are simply moral fables using human-like animal characters. They entertain, and teach general life lessons. On another level, B'rer Rabbit is a downtrodden slave, overcoming predatory oppressors through intelligence and guile. He takes cathartic revenge on the oppressors and shows a path to liberation.

Trickster figures like B'rer Rabbit are common in subaltern folk stories and are often loaded with aggression. Such performances also rehearse revolution. For example, medieval carnival enacted a levelling of social roles. Actual revolts often took their scripts from carnival.



Folk culture is very different from elite culture. Each "text" usually lacks any authoritative version. Instead, a story, play, song, etc. is reformulated slightly differently on each occasion. It is often oral and is not recorded except in the memories of those who repeat it. This kind of culture is difficult for people like Bhabha to access and analyse. Indeed, much of the folk culture of colonial India is lost to contemporary scholars. However, scholars from the Subaltern Studies school, such as Ranajit Guha and Shahid Amin, have reconstructed peasant resistance in colonial India from a perspective similar to Scott's. We also know about hidden transcripts from contexts such as American slavery. Slaves created "offstage" spaces such as hush arbors in which a radical discourse was spoken. Scott also discusses the ways in which subordinate groups in the Indian caste system, when it was still officially legitimated, ignored or subverted the system. These ranged from simply ignoring ritual taboos, to formulating beliefs that the true scriptures revealed caste equality and had been concealed by high-caste Hindus.

Generally, outside of the context of revolutionary movements, oppressed people muzzle their anger. They hold it back and only release it in hidden-transcript spaces. Such hidden defiance is very common. So is noncompliance in practice. Outright defiance or refusal is rare, and more dangerous. It threatens the entire social order. Such defiance is defined

less by the failure to follow dominant norms than by the overt declaration of a refusal to do so – a gesture of explicit insubordination. If the dissident voice resonates with others' hidden transcripts, it has charismatic effects. Such gestures rupture "hegemony" – the appearance of legitimacy – by bringing the hidden transcript into the public domain. They involve a refusal to keep up appearances, and a release of the anger which has been choked back for so long. In normal conditions, there are a few such acts but they are quickly punished. A defiant actor, even if unsuccessful, can come to symbolise the entire group casting off a lifetime of indignity.

Sometimes, however, such acts take on epidemic proportions. Acts of these kind are '***charismatic***', inspiring others. They break the double life of an oppressive society and feel very empowering. A successful opening of this kind leads to a carnival-like atmosphere – joyous, intoxicating, re-humanising. Such moments also have insurrectionary significance. They are generally only possible in the context of full-scale revolts against a social system. Revolts generally happen, either because of overwhelming desperation, or because the chains of power weaken. They build on everyday infrapolitics and hidden transcripts. The electrifying power generated by a charismatic act is derived from the hidden transcripts of listeners.

Bhabha, like Scott, rejects the idea of false consciousness. However, the nature of subaltern agency or "strategy" in his work is ambiguous. It often seems that Bhabha's subalterns identify with dominant categories, and

subvert them unconsciously. There is no hidden transcript in Bhabha, and no moment of insurrectionary joy. Also, like Bhabha, Scott suggests that the powerful seek integrated knowledge. Oppressed people resist being 'legible' or knowable so as to maintain infrapolitical power. However, this resistance to 'legibility' is very much a product of contingent, bad forms of power. It happens in conditions of domination and in modern states which require simplification. Amongst themselves, subaltern people produce knowledge, power, and ego-satisfactions through direct discourse. Also, the empowerment, excitement, and anger of Scott's 'charismatic' moments of revolt are alien to Bhabha's affective politics.

Both Bhabha and Scott discuss subversive public performances by oppressed people. However, Scott believes there is a distinct worldview motivating these performances. The performances deliberately subvert dominant scripts because they express a different script coming from "outside" the public transcript and unspeakable in it (though one which is always in a concealed dialogue with the dominant public script). Scott insists that a dynamic, strategic view of power-relations is impossible without considering the hidden transcript. In contrast, Bhabha takes the interior subversion of public transcripts to be a textual process inside the dominant text, arising from its supplementary or subordinate term. Bhabha does not seem to recognise any possibility of a hidden transcript, or of multiple non-overlapping social sites.

The implications of Scott's theories are rather different from those of Bhabha's. This is significant, since Bhabha's approach also typifies much

of today's progressive politics. Scott counsels oppressed people to conceal their resistance, unless they are in a period of open revolt. This is alien to the exhibitionist, self-positioning, stridently transgressive approach of today's identity politics. From a Scottian point of view, such politics is far too visible to be effective as infrapolitics. One does not post a hidden transcript on a public Facebook page, or declare it in the abstract of an academic paper. If one conceals it in a novel or artwork, one does not wish for someone like Bhabha to decode the hidden meaning and declare it where the elite can read it.

Many people today believe they are speaking truth to power. They gain feelings of empowerment by making swingeing claims about structural and/or personal oppression. However, these gestures rarely have a revolutionary effect. They do not create situations of revolt and are not met with extraordinary punishments. This might mean that they are still within the sphere of public transcript performances. It might mean that the people making the claims are sufficiently socially included that they can "speak their truth" without rupturing the public transcript. Or, it might mean that their oppression is disguised and displaced in such a way that a ruptural gesture is avoided. If so, they are still performing cathartic displacements rather than charismatic acts. Bhabha's work seems designed to avoid any such ruptural moments. It seeks to have the revolutionary effects of speaking truth to power, without the corresponding social cleavage. However, if Scott is right, it is not possible to have the truth-effects without the ruptures. A breakdown of the dominant transcript is simultaneously a situation of revolt, or repression.

The absence both of outright repression and effective revolt suggests that the gestures being made are compatible with the public transcript. They are not really challenging the power of dominant groups.

It is unclear how relevant Scott's account is to atomised, mediatised societies today. Scott limits his theory to systems based on personal domination, which require explicit subordination and deference. It isn't meant to apply to democracies, egalitarian stateless societies, or many kinds of everyday relations. He also suggests that the conditions for hidden transcripts break down if people are too atomised or surveilled. Hidden transcripts arguably emerged into full sight in the 1960s/70s revolts. However, increasing authoritarianism seems to be reproducing some of the conditions for Scottian infrapolitics, if it ever disappeared. There is evidence of hidden transcripts among marginal groups, particularly so-called criminals, excluded groups, and communities in the global South. But there is also evidence of widespread acceptance of neoliberal ideology. At the same time, surveillance and atomisation make hidden transcripts harder to articulate.

Hidden-transcript claims would be the kind of revolutionary claims Bhabha rejects. They might be visible in anonymous forms such as graffiti, and in moments of revolt such as “riots”. One might thus suggest that today's hidden transcripts include the rejection of the police, the work-system, the media, judiciary, politicians, and other authorities. Clear examples might include the ideas of 'rightful resistance' and Maoist-era social rights which appear in public in so-called “mass incidents” in China (Lee, 2007), and the discourses appearing during the Arab Spring, such as the sense of being mistreated and dehumanised by a corrupt elite (Moosa, 2011).

Counterinsurgency measures to ban "extremism" often focus on opposition to the "democratic" state and the legal system, or use of illegal tactics as a form of protest. The public-transcript illusion might therefore be summarised as keeping up the appearance that the dominant power-regime is an inclusive liberal democracy and the appearance of legal obedience. The overwhelming majority of people break the law in many small ways, sometimes unknowingly. Many people even in the global North avoid the police. Yet a culture of support for the police and judiciary is widespread (Graeber, 2007a). The types of movements which articulate critiques of these views are still subject to marginalisation and repression. This suggests that critiques along these lines, rather than those focused on colonialism or modern reason, are the critiques which actually violate the dominant public transcript.

It is worth comparing Bhabha's theory of resistance-through-dissimulation to James C. Scott's ethnographic and historical account of everyday resistance. There are noticeable similarities between Bhabha's theory and Scott's. They both emphasise the strategic, mimicking, hybrid nature of oppressed people's communication in dominant, "public transcript" discourse. They both emphasise the subversive effects of these performances. However, they differ in other ways. Scott does not use a Derridean language model as a root-metaphor. He does not view subaltern actors as primarily acting within the dominant text. Instead, he suggests that they have their own "offstage" discourse, known as the "hidden transcript". This transcript is constructed by subaltern people among themselves.

It is rarely made public except during moments of revolt. But it is often concealed in public-transcript performances as a second layer of meaning visible only to other subalterns. It is through the hidden transcript that subaltern people produce meaning for themselves.

Hence, the gestures Bhabha finds meaningless are only meaningless from outside the hidden transcript. They are meaningless to colonisers, and secondary readers relying on colonial texts, because their meaning is concealed – not because their meaning is inherently ambiguous. The main difference between Bhabha and Scott is that Scott recognises the existence of the hidden transcript. This allows him to talk about mimicry without assuming that the hybrid identity is what peasants "really are" or think they are. Hybridity is a conscious strategy in which peasants defend some degree of autonomy, on the basis of an alternative subjectivity (and not simply as an empty place within language). If one believes Scott's account, Bhabha is thus wrong that mimicry is a mask which conceals no presence or identity behind it (LC, 88). For peasants and colonised people themselves, according to Scott, the immanent meanings of these gestures are found within the hidden transcript. The gestures appear meaningless to the coloniser, either because they are hidden, or because the coloniser refuses or is unable to recognise the peasant perspective as meaningful.

Hence, subaltern agency does not produce a loss of meaning for subaltern people. In addition to sneaky 'strategic' discourses aimed at adversaries, there are always also honest, literal discourses among allies. The use of the zone of ambiguity does not entail a primary position of hybridity, but an outer manipulation of a public transcript one does not accept. When revolts happen, according to Scott, the hidden transcript bursts out into the public sphere. Peasants do not engage in the kind of 'oracular', 'dissimulating', serpent-tongued discourse Bhabha advocates. Their discourse may have this effect in the public transcript. But they also have a direct, dialogical, intersubjective, meaning- and ego-strengthening discourse amongst themselves. Even if they subvert *the coloniser's* discourse,

they do not subvert discourse *as such*. Scott's view also seems to reflect radical social movement practices better than Bhabha's model. Take for instance Elizabeth Wood's (2001) work on rebellion in El Salvador. Peasant rebels clearly present their position in terms of an authentic voice or "standing-up", and a previous situation of abject submission and silence. They do not subvert dominant meanings, but counterpose an alternative discourse.

If this is the case, then Bhabha's objections to (for example) views of racism as a kind of anti-modern regression (LC, 248-9) also cease to hold. These objections rely on the prior claim that subaltern resistance occurs through inbetweenness *inside* dominant categories. If it does not, then rejecting Bhabha's view does not harm subaltern resistance in the slightest. Instead, it opens up other lines of resistance. Bhabha's view opens one set of theories and responses to current conditions, but it closes down another. For example, theories of regression may not necessarily be racist and colonial, or destroy spaces of resistance. One might recognise "regression" to non-capitalist social forms (such as subsistence economies) as progressive, or one might oppose racism precisely *because* it is regressive. Similarly, theories of dual labour markets and uneven development (e.g. Wolpe, 1972; Allen, 1994; Aguirre Beltran, 1979) are often extremely productive for understanding oppression and resistance. Forbidding them on principle, on moral or strategic grounds, forecloses a range of possibilities. Bhabha does not *show* that the possibilities he forecloses (generally, for militant resistance and difference) are less valuable than those his theory produces (generally, for subverting systems from inside); he asserts or assumes it.

Recognition of autonomous subaltern discourses reflects back on Bhabha's discussions. In the case of the ambiguous chapatis, for example (see above, 497-9), it is probable that the intended meaning was clear to Indian recipients through hidden transcripts, but ambiguous to colonial observers who were not party to this transcript. The appearance of ambiguity is not fundamental to the incident, but is conveyed to today's reader because the colonial archive provides the main source of information. In reading the chapatis as ambiguous *as such* and *in themselves*, Bhabha paradoxically treats the colonial, top-down point of view as the *only* point of view. He recognises only colonial discourse as valid discourse, and contributes to silencing the hidden transcript. In this way, he reinforces the flattening of discourse, the denial of depth, which is part of neoliberal capitalism.

However, Bhabha's reading is problematic. He cannot show whether or not the peasants who distributed chapatis intended or received any particular meaning, beyond an affect of panic or a desire to panic the colonisers. Of course, his critics also cannot show the opposite. But argument by analogy is possible. Progressive historians of revolt generally denounce the view that unrest simply amounts to panic or irrationality. Authors like E.P. Thompson (1971) and George Rudé (1964), as well as Scott, insist that peasant and worker revolts which seem irrational to top-down observers actually express moral economies and other everyday belief-systems among peasants and workers themselves. Furthermore, it seems counterintuitive to suggest that panic disrupts dominant power-systems. Media

events and spectacular militarised responses seem to manage panic to the system's benefit. If the 'war of nerves' exists as an effective strategy, it has today been recuperated in the mediatised terror spectacle. As noted above, 9/11 disrupted meaning very effectively. It produced the exact paranoid response Bhabha expects when colonial "narcissism" is disrupted. It triggered a situation where anxiety and risk-awareness dominated western consciousness. And it was followed by a series of vicious reprisals, just like the Indian Revolt. This panic, like securitisation, moral panics and risk-analysis more broadly, have not have progressive effects.

Bhabha seems to assume the primacy of the colonial text for the colonised. According to Bhabha, colonised people's resistances and struggles are always directed towards reinflecting and subverting the colonial text. But is this how social movements work? There are serious theories of social movements which suggest the primacy of demands for recognition. In particular, the Habermasian deliberative democrat Axel Honneth argues that social movements often involve a demand for recognition. However, this model does not seem appropriate to anti-colonial movements. In these cases, revolt does *not* come from the *che vuoi* dynamic, such as the demand for recognition from the master. It comes from pressing conflict with an adversary, from discourses internal to the community in revolt, or even from an alternative way of forming connections in action (rather than through linguistic articulation). Anti-colonial movements do not seek recognition from the coloniser. They seek to expel the coloniser.

Critique and Analysis: Philosophising Colonialism

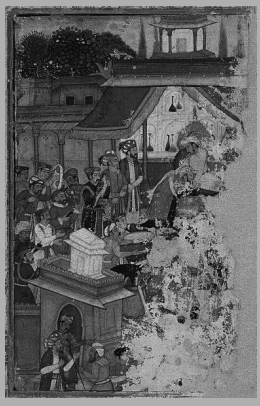
Another difficulty here is that Bhabha in fact applies a European theory himself. It is therefore quite possible that he reproduces Eurocentric hegemony. Another line of criticism is that mimicry actually entails cultural colonisation or submersion. To the extent

that the colonised use *aspects of western thought* to construct identities which resist – such as playing on the mirroring, representative assumptions of western thought – they arguably also enter inside the colonial imaginary, completing its work in subsuming them. For example, Young suggests that Bhabha uses transcendental categories from psychoanalysis (1990:184). Bhabha seems to assume that the relationship between coloniser and colonised is a self-other, *che vuoi* relationship. But it is by no means certain that this is the case. Colonisers may not have entered into a *che vuoi* process with the colonised – but rather, may have simply used the colonised to resolve a *che vuoi* process within the 'home' country. For instance, perhaps Robert Clive was not really interested in getting recognition from the Mughal Emperor by becoming Nawab of Bengal. Perhaps he was mainly interested in capturing revenues so as to enhance his wealth, power and prestige in Britain.

In the Margins: Robert Clive and the East India Company

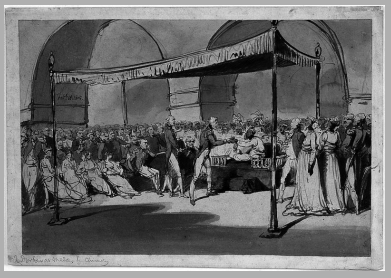
Robert Clive went down in British colonial history as a heroic adventurer. But he was actually a ferocious coloniser. Prior to Clive, the English (later British) ***East India Company*** (EIC) was limited to controlling a handful of port cities. Clive went a step further, and effectively became the local ruler of Bengal. Bengal was a large, wealthy state in eastern India which included modern-day Bangladesh and West Bengal. It was part of the Indian empire, ruled by the Mughal emperor. However, the local ruler or Nawab had considerable local autonomy. He owed fealty and tribute to

the emperor, but he also controlled local tax revenues. The EIC coastal cities were effectively ceded as fiefs by the Mughal emperor or local rulers. This kind of 'fragmenting, overlapping and rival forms of sovereigny' (Stern, 2007:3) was normal in the early modern world. Initially the EIC's role was not very different from the concessions captured historically by Genoese and Venetian merchants in various cities in Europe. Early trade was marked by large exports of valuable gold bullion to finance purchases of luxury and manufactured goods in India. But the EIC's role was backed by gunboat diplomacy. The EIC was enmeshed in conflicts among powerful European countries to capture shares of global trade, and it became enmeshed with an industrial economy which differed fundamentally from earlier trading systems. In retrospect, it clearly laid the foundations for colonialism.



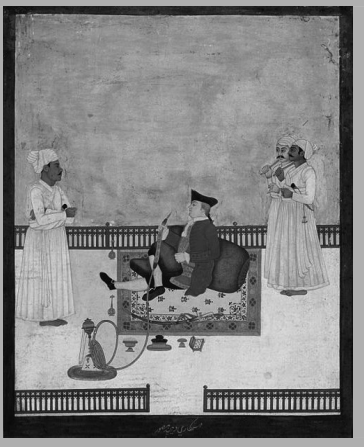
The EIC was a chartered joint-stock monopoly trading company. In some ways, it was a forerunner of today's multinational corporations. However, it had a special monopoly position based on a Royal Charter. Other British merchants, known as "interlopers", were not allowed to trade in India without EIC consent. From its earliest days, the EIC carried on quasi-political and quasi-military activities, including autocratically governing its own settlements. Its main activity was armed trading, or commerce backed by military threats. Force was initially deployed mainly as a means to the end of profiting from trade (Chaudhuri, 1978:115). It was seen as justified when, and only when, it aided regular trading profits.

Armed trade was a new approach which captured super-profits, or profits above the levels obtainable from ordinary trade. By paying for their own army instead of paying bribes to local rulers, the EIC could lock in its trade privileges. These privileges couldn't be sold on to someone else for a higher price. It was harder for local rulers to rescind them. And local rulers could no longer drive out, mass-punish or massacre traders, as had happened in the past. Armed trade therefore made sense from an economic point of view. But it led to huge expenditures or "sunk costs" in building and maintaining fortresses and garrisons. This led to pressure to increase local revenues to cover costs. It was always a matter of dispute whether the profits were worth the costs – and whether a private company should be ruling territories and using military force at all.



European companies used armed trade to increase their strength in Asian trade networks which had previously been based on peaceful trade (Ogborn, 2002:162; Chaudhuri, 1991:437). Earlier British scholars typically portrayed the EIC as changing over time from a trade company to an empire. However, recent scholarship suggests that armed activities were central from the start. It had a built-in tendency towards empire. Armed trading arguably created incentives to use force aggressively so as to recoup costs or increase profits. Some scholars also believe there was a long-standing desire to create a financially self-sustaining set-up in India which would repatriate profits to Britain (Stern, 2008:280). However, the EIC's early development was largely as an enclave economy cut-off from the surrounding subsistence economy. In this way, it is similar to later patterns of capitalist activity in postcolonies, especially in Africa (see Ferguson, 2005).

In the eighteenth century, the British government and army had a limited role in India. The EIC operated as an independent actor with its own army and navy, as well as courts, social welfare systems, diplomacy, and other governmental functions. Its military force had begun as a small force designed to fight pirates and interlopers, and deter local rulers from restricting trade or suppressing the EIC. Before 1750 it only had a few hundred soldiers whose main role was to guard the EIC forts in the trading cities. But its armaments were also appropriate for aggressive engagements, and its size mushroomed after 1750. The EIC's aggression seems to have increased as Europe developed technological superiority in weaponry, which happened only in the eighteenth century. Even then, the EIC's naval forces were no match for well-fortified positions. The EIC's superiority was limited to pitched land battles where heavy weaponry could be deployed.

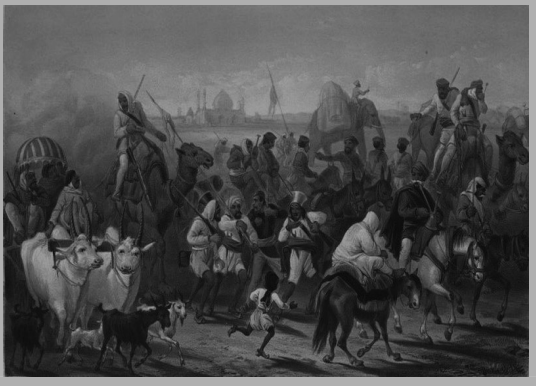


The company was established by royal charter and had a monopoly on British trade with India. It was run from headquarters in London and overlapped with other parts of the Establishment at the time, including the government. However, its position in the British Establishment was precarious. The EIC was subject to a series of scandals both before and after the conquest of Bengal (Bowen, 2008:12). It had a reputation for crime and corruption (Keay, 1991:364). The government was unhappy about the company controlling territory in a state-like way. The EIC was seen as corrupting the virtues of trade and of the military, and usurping the powers of the monarch and Parliament. It was tolerated partly because the EIC army was indispensable in responding

responding to geopolitical threats in Asia (Callaghan, 1972). The London office appointed senior officials on the ground, including the Presidents or local governors of the EIC trading cities. In practice, the world of local EIC agents, known as "Anglo-Indians", was autonomous both from the London EIC and from India. Anglo-Indians lived largely apart from Indian society and interacted mainly with one another. However, some picked up "Indian" habits or married locally. This kind of hybridisation was more common in the earlier periods, as Anglo-Indians became increasingly racist and insular over time. Some sympathised with the American Revolution and wanted to create an independent British-settler state in India. Others spent years or decades in India before returning to Britain, or practised circular migration between the two sites.

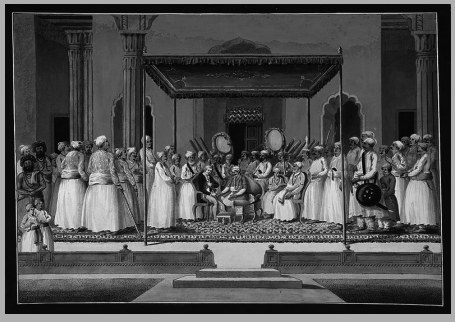
So who, exactly, were the colonisers? The EIC in India consisted of an elite composed of low-ranking aristocrats, merchants and adventurers, a small intermediary layer of poorer British recruits, and a rank-and-file of Indian soldiers, as well as Indian political and merchant allies. The small "Anglo-Indian" population was split between military and bureaucratic subgroups (there were also a few commercial planters and merchants, but hardly any settlers). The majority belonged to the military portion. They viewed the London-based officials of the EIC with contempt. They saw the EIC bureaucracy as cumbersome and moralistic. And they had the advantages over their London superiors, not only of military power on the ground, but of local knowledge and connections. The senior bureaucrats and generals were recruited by patronage, mainly from the junior ranks of the British elite and upper-middle classes. They were mostly people too low-ranking in the class structure to obtain similar senior positions in Britain. The lower-ranking soldiers came to occupy intermediate positions, commanding larger numbers of Indian soldiers. They were recruited from social groups at the bottom of Britain's class hierarchy, including demobilised ex-soldiers, merchant sailors, pirates, criminals, and unemployed people. Britain at the time had an extremely rigid class structure and the EIC provided rare opportunities for upward mobility.

At the height of the EIC, hundreds of thousands of rank-and-file soldiers were hired within India. Most of these soldiers were from relatively privileged groups – either Muslims favoured by the Muslim Mughal rulers, or high-caste Hindus. However, British officers always outranked Indians in the army. These local soldiers, known as "sepoys", did most of the army's fighting. They were trained like a European army. The EIC generally had to be careful not to upset these "native" soldiers. The EIC also created a 'community of interests' with Indian merchants (Watson, 1980:81). These merchants saw EIC settlements as safe havens from the Mughal government and from civil war. Sometimes, they benefited from EIC schemes which allowed them to evade taxes. There were also regular British Army soldiers deployed from the 1750s onwards and especially after 1778. Conflict between the two army hierarchies was also common. Army officials outranked EIC officers on paper and were of higher social status. But they were often younger and had less local knowledge and battle experience. In practice, the army and (eventually) government officials sent to India had to be careful not to upset the Anglo-Indians.



Postcolonial theory has encouraged an image of colonialism as a bureaucratic knowledge-system based on “modern reason”. Colonisers supposedly sought to “know” colonised peoples through their archives, and to “develop” them for their own good. This image reflects to some degree the ideology of EIC officials in London, and the ideology of later British

government officials who ruled India after 1857. However, there was a huge discrepancy in the EIC. The London section were, indeed, highly bureaucratic and obsessed with collating knowledge about India. But this partly reflected their lack of control on the ground. In the eighteenth and nineteenth century, journeys to and from India took months. People in Britain, including EIC officials, had little knowledge of India. They often lacked basic geographical and cultural knowledge. They lived in a reality 'based solely upon the written word' (Bowen, 2008:179). Central officials thus developed a 'firmly held belief that the possession of information represented the key to effective administration, enlightened government, and the close supervision of overseas servants' (Bowen, 2008:152). This led to the growth of an immense archive which was almost obsessively added to and ordered. The impression is unavoidable that this archive was a response to the London Company's lack of control on the ground. Knowledge-gathering was not an attempt to entrench a fixity of identity. It was an attempt to gain leverage over other Europeans in a context of lack of control. Colonisers did not oscillate between narcissism and aggression (or paranoia). One group engaged in an obsessive pursuit of knowledge, another in aggression motivated by material accumulation. And this separation was not visible from the standpoint of the colonised, who confronted the Company as a monolith (though compare Alfred, 2009:174-6).



Officials in London relied on reports from their representatives on the ground – who had considerable leeway to spin or lie in what they reported. On the ground, military officers had more leverage than bureaucrats. The system was autocratic, but formal command structures carried limited

weight. Military officers and soldiers were fiercely defensive of their income and other privileges. Successful reforms relied on Anglo-Indian cooperation. Reforms which hurt their interests were almost impossible in practice. Civil-military conflict was common, sometimes approaching the level of mutiny. London-based bureaucrats tried constantly to reform the militarised structure of the company on the ground. They were afraid that the EIC army was out of their control (Peers, 1990). Whether there was a definite ideology of the London EIC is debated. Bowen (2008) argues that the Company had little ideology beyond a belief in free trade and efficient, frugal organisation. However, Stern (2008:275) suggests that it had an elaborate philosophy including ideas of virtue, obedience, obligation, paternalism, service, and duty. Authoritarianism and despotism were accepted as means of moral improvement and bulwarks against chaos. This was not a liberal, rationalist vision. It was closer to the authoritarian ideology of authors such as Thomas Hobbes. It reflected early-modern royal absolutism rather than later democratic ideals. However, it incorporated aspects of the emerging bourgeois ideas of civility and civilisation which would later become part of liberalism (see Elias, 1939; Hirschman, 1997; Macpherson, 1962; Skillen, 1978).

In spite of its qualms, the British government appears to have allowed the EIC to operate because of a desire to expand foreign trade without direct geopolitical or financial entanglements. It was also worried about losing influence to other European powers in India, who operated their own East India Companies in a similar manner. In principle, EIC power stemmed from a Royal Charter provided by the British monarchy. It was a legal grey area whether the company's territorial holdings belonged in the last instance to the British state. In practice, the state was no more able to control the company on the ground than were its London officials. The company provided money to the government in the form of loans, bribes and taxes. As time went on, it increasingly penetrated government through MPs' stock

ownership in the company. Rich EIC veterans managed to install their own MPs through practices such as buying up "rotten boroughs" – small constituencies with few or no voters, which could effectively be bought by purchasing the land. Once installed, these MPs could derail attempts to regulate the EIC. After Plassey, there was increasing unease in the London elite about expensive wars of conquest. This only gradually gave way to imperialist euphoria.

Hence, it was difficult for the EIC or the government to exercise any control over their representatives on the ground. The actors on the ground were mercenaries and profiteers with little interest in bureaucracy or knowledge. Working for the EIC in India was risky. As well as political instability and hostility, there was an enormous risk of dying from disease. As a result, the EIC largely attracted adventurous risk-takers (Callaghan, 1972:xi; Bowen, 2008:270). Most were motivated by money. Even common soldiers from Britain could make a fortune by working-class standards – in the unlikely event that they survived long enough. Trading or being an EIC representative meant someone on a low level in the rigid class structure inside the British elite could make a fortune which would be impossible in Britain. The EIC thus attracted the middle-class or junior elite fractions, rather than the British Establishment elite (Razzell, 1963; Callaghan, 1972:26-7, 134, 193; Marshall, 1997). But EIC incomes were themselves low. EIC employees could earn fortunes only through private trade. This was a high-risk, high-stakes occupation. The EIC was also heavily based on patronage. Smaller merchants, particularly those outside London, preferred free trade to chartered companies and tried to break the EIC monopoly (Moss, 1976).

Robert Clive had many of the traits which would be called psychopathic today. He was domineering, fearless, charismatic, grandiose, lied a lot, and

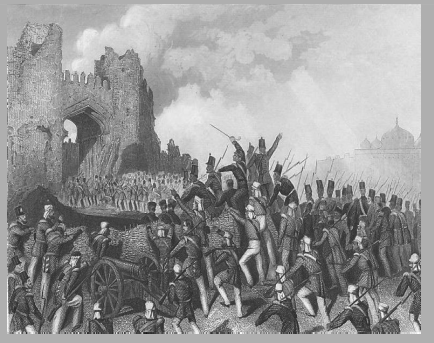
loved giving orders but hated obeying them. He was described as addicted to fighting, and ran a protection racket as a teenager. In one of his stints in India, he created kangaroo courts in an attempt to establish absolute rule

over Anglo-Indians in Calcutta. He appears to have been motivated by greed and a desire for power and status. In principle, he was a representative of the EIC and accountable to its leaders in London. In practice, he sought to make his fortune by whatever means he could.

He was from a family at the low end of Britain's elite who struggled to survive through trade. His father worked in London and was able to win his son a position as an EIC agent. Unusually, he later transferred from the bureaucracy to the less prestigious (but more powerful) military branch. He then gained distinctions for bravery and prowess during wars against the French and local Indian rulers before being appointed as deputy governor at one of the EIC's treaty ports. He does not look very much like postcolonial theory's stereotypical “coloniser”.

It was the London bureaucrats, trying in vein to control their subordinates on the ground, who were obsessed with knowledge and writing. This London EIC bureaucracy was largely uninterested in, or hostile to, conquest and adventure (Bowen, 2008:262; Keay, 1991:273). It was focused on trade and bureaucracy. Paradoxically, the bureaucracy's "modern reason" was neither motivated by colonialism nor a response to Indian society. It was a defensive reaction to its loss of control over British military adventurers. On paper, the London bureaucracy had command authority over actors on the ground. London-based EIC bureaucrats decided whether wars would be waged, concessions sought, or practices changed. They issued long,

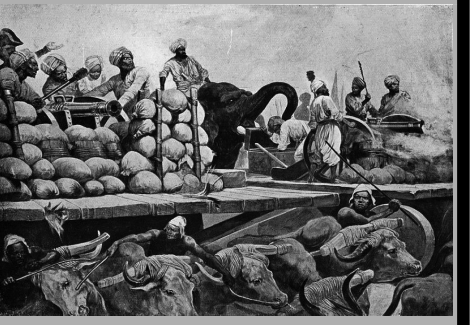
elaborate lists of rules and regulations to try to rein in corruption and aggression. In reality, they had little influence. Local EIC agents were more powerful and also more knowledgeable about the Indian context. They ignored or reinterpreted rules they didn't like. And London officials were often confronted by a *fait accompli* on the ground. By the time a ship carrying an order to avoid a war reached India, the war could have been fought and won, or lost. As far as we know, there was no order from London to take over Bengal. Clive was effectively running his own policy, motivated by personal financial advancement.



The Anglo-Indian EIC establishment had its eyes on the wealth controlled by the Bengali local ruler, the Nawab. Bengal was at the time the richest state in India, and was richer than the British government. Most of this wealth came from taxes paid to the local government. In 1756, a new Nawab succeeded to the position. At the time, the British and French EIC's were anticipating a new European war. They prepared for it by strengthening their fortifications. But they did this without the Nawab's permission. The Nawab ordered them to stop. The British EIC refused. In retaliation, the new Nawab attacked the EIC forces and captured a lightly defended fort at Calcutta. Most EIC soldiers were ordered to flee and allied Indian troops deserted. A small but contested number of soldiers and Anglo-Indian civilians were captured. Many of the captured EIC officials died of heatstroke or suffocation in a punishment cell in the British fortress, known as the Black Hole of Calcutta. This was apparently not planned or known by the Nawab. But it fuelled outrage in Britain and in other EIC cities. Clive was dispatched along with a British navy officer to retake Calcutta.

His small force was outnumbered by a massive Bengali army. But they managed to break through the Bengali lines and the Nawab sued for peace.

A year later, negotiations broke down and Clive's army confronted the Bengali army at Plassey (Palashi) in 1757. Clive's forces had powerful cannons, which were unmatched on the Bengali side. But they were heavily outnumbered. Very little actual fighting took place. Clive had made a secret agreement with several discontented Bengali aristocrats. Depending on interpretation, this involved either hiring mercenaries as double agents, or exploiting Hindu discontent with Muslim rule (Keay, 1991:315-16). Either way, Clive's allies on the enemy side led their portion of the army away from the battlefield. Clive's army did a better job of protecting its cannons from the difficult weather than the Nawab's army. The cannons broke cavalry charges on Clive's positions. Most of the fighting was long-range exchanges of gunfire. Over a day, the morale of the Nawab's forces seemed to be worn down and the Nawab fled from the field, followed by his army. The Nawab was later captured and killed by Bengali rivals and Clive put one of his local allies on the throne. In return, the ruler allowed Clive to take whatever he wanted from the royal treasury. The newly installed Nawab eventually turned on the EIC and massacred a British garrison. After further warfare, Clive was effectively made ruler of Bengal by the Mughal emperor.



The forces backed by Clive thus "won" the Battle of Plassey. But in reality, this was not so much a battle as a diplomatic exchange. Clive made alliances

with local politicians and exploited Hindu/Muslim rivalries to undermine the other side. The Nawab's army collapsed from within. Subsequent Nawabs were no longer independent of the EIC. Instead, the EIC put its allies on the throne. The EIC won a right called *dastak* – the right to exempt cargoes under the Company's protection from Bengali taxes. In practice, this means that the EIC captured most of Bengal's tax revenue by selling immunities to merchants. (The EIC had already collected similar revenues under a contentiously interpreted tax-free trade agreement of 1717). This role was later expanded to include aggressive tax collection by EIC forces, accompanied by atrocities. Most of the income went to private merchants working with the EIC. This was a sea change in the role of the EIC and the beginning of territorial colonisation of India. It took two years for the London EIC to respond coherently to the changed situation. Crucially, it was carried out by locally-based 'sub-imperialists' motivated by crude mercantilism and the economic use of force (Stokes, 1973:142-3).

After Plassey, the EIC captured the revenues formerly accrued by the Bengali local government. It also periodically raided the royal treasury. And it set up a debt regime which required the Bengali government to keep paying interest indefinitely. This last trick is certainly familiar from later times! Profits continued to be captured mainly by individual EIC officials rather than the Company in London. The anomaly of a trading company physically controlling territory was always controversial in Britain. In principle, the revenues Clive obtained were owed to the EIC. But Clive sought to personally capture as much as possible, or channel revenues to his allies. There is evidence that Clive ordered atrocities against Indian peasants, forced them to grow cash crops – thus exacerbating famines, and raised high taxes which hurt the poor. Taxes were raised by at least 20%. In 1769-73, Bengal suffered a devastating famine. A third of the population died.

Clive's profiteering was arguably the cause of this. India suffered 31 major famines during the period of British rule, the most recent of which killed 4 million people in 1943 (although most happened in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries). There were only 17 major famines in the previous 2000 years (Davis, 2000) and there have been no major famines since Indian independence. Smaller local famines have occurred but threats of major famines have been headed off by government responses. State rations and subsidies, agricultural credit schemes and self-reliance contributed to this. Famines under British rule usually did not stem from food shortages. They were caused by infrastructural problems in transporting food, and the poverty of Indian peasants which meant they could not buy food in lean years. This meant that any disaster or shortage of rainfall would instantly lead to widespread famine.

The desire to regulate the excesses of the EIC was one of the drivers of eventual direct colonisation. On the whole, the EIC kept a low profile in London and sought to avoid controversy. It also developed patronage relations and overlapping vested interests which cultivated support in the Establishment. Despite this, its existence was accompanied by a series of court cases, Parliamentary inquiries and India Bills in Parliament. In the meantime, through the 1760s-70s, local Anglo-Indian commanders continued to start wars for personal financial advantage, with little oversight. Thirty years after Plassey, in the 1780s, the state formally turned the EIC into an arm of the state. The government sought, rather unsuccessfully, to regulate the EIC through a Board of Control. After the 1857 Indian Revolt, the company was effectively abolished and the British state took direct control of its Indian territories.

Until 1857, the EIC army proved able to defy state control. By this time, about a third of British MPs owned stock in the EIC (Bowen, 2008:95). The EIC was also so intertwined with the British stock market that its collapse would have huge knock-on effects. It was "too big to fail". And the state was reluctant to dissolve the company because this would mean either expensive colonial entanglements or a drastic loss of power. Over time, more and more EIC stockholders were former EIC or British army officers. They tended to align with conservative forces within Britain, against the liberal wing of the Establishment. They also sought to take over the EIC. Clive periodically returned to London. In these interludes, he managed to get elected as an MP for the Tories, the more conservative of Britain's two main parties at the time. On one of these occasions, he represented a rotten borough. He also faced a trial in Parliament over corruption and atrocities in India. A vote to censure Clive was defeated. On another interlude in Britain, he started a dispute with the head of the EIC's Court of Directors, which he won. Accusations of bribery, interference in parliamentary elections, and other dirty tricks are common. The London/Anglo-Indian divide was reproduced as a divide between stockholders and directors within the London EIC. The ex-migrants also encouraged pro-imperialist attitudes in Britain. They presented their economic grabs as improvements in Indian government and economics. Clive's predecessor Childs had attempted to take over the company and even created a faction in Parliament. This was an attempted palace coup, by economic means, carried out by a junior section in the Establishment.

The social impact of EIC activities is debated, but largely negative for India. Expanded trade penetration by the EIC and other foreign trade companies undermined the financial and social base of the Mughal emperor. The more the empire declined, the more European companies competed to carve up

trade and revenues. English scholars have historically alleged that the EIC was effectively dragged into greater and greater entanglements by internal Indian social collapse. However, Indian scholars generally view the EIC as the main cause of social disruption in this period (Chatterjee, 1996; Sen, 1998; Parthasarathi, 2001). The Mughal government was already weak and the decentralised power of rulers such as the Nawab was great prior to EIC activities. But the system was viable, because of India's agricultural surplus. The EIC undermined government revenues, undermined political control over merchants and other social groups, and undermined perceptions of traditional authority, both nationally and locally. Wider discussions of colonial trade in this period suggest that it operated mainly as a self-contained enclave economy. The enclaves developed in isolation from the surrounding, mainly subsistence economy. And they tended to be costly to this surrounding economy (Raychaudhuri, 1968:98-9). As we have seen, the EIC also intensified the level and the violence of surplus value extraction from the peasants, leading to millions of deaths. Peasant and indigenous revolts happened every few years in colonial India.

Scholars disagree over whether superprofits from India underpinned Britain's industrial growth and enrichment in the eighteenth century. For a long time, many scholars accepted the view that Britain had sucked economic resources from India which it used to fuel its own development. This has been challenged based on the relatively low level of trade and profits arising from the EIC's activities. Trade with India was less than 3% of global trade in the 1790s and the EIC was relatively unprofitable until

about 1750 (Cuenca-Esteban, 2005). However, it is possible that trades of low- for high-value goods were established in this period. The EIC also helped with other problems such as the British state's international balance of payments. And EIC superprofits did not necessarily flow into EIC coffers. Most of them were pocketed by individual officials or traders. Some scholars still argue that the EIC's activities contributed to British economic growth. This happened largely through mercantile advantages derived from locking-in particular trade patterns. It also included raw material supplies and insulation from disruptions in other trade networks (Cuenca-Esteban, 2005; Bowen, 2008). Also, the EIC's activities helped Europe to take control of the global trade in high-value bulk commodities – the kind of things which were transported by sea. Europe was able to dominate this trade only in the period after Plassey (Ogborn, 2002:158).

Views of Indians among EIC officials shifted a lot over time. EIC views of Indians seem to have moved from an initial fear of, and desire to contain, cultural "contamination", to grudging respect for Indian culture combined with local accommodation to it, followed by arrogant developmentalism and racialism by 1800. This appears to have reflected, rather than caused, changed situations on the ground (Stokes, 1973). "Anglo-Indians" increasingly isolated themselves from Indian society. Few spoke Bengali. This paradoxically made them dependent on Indian intermediaries – Bhabha's "mimic men". The degree of interference in Indian society seems to have been relatively low before the British state took control. Rather, the EIC captured the surplus from the Indian agricultural economy, which had previously gone to the local state. This analysis is consistent with dependency approaches (Stokes, 1973:137; Callaghan, 1973:150). The Company's established pragmatic and autocratic ideas began to be supplemented by developmentalism after the 1780s (Bowen, 2008:153).

The postcolonial view of colonisers as modernist, knowledge-obsessed, elite-level bureaucrats seems to be modelled on government and EIC officials, including those who ruled India after 1857. It was these later colonisers who interfered most extensively in the Indian economy. However, initial colonisation was largely carried out by a very different kind of actor. "Anglo-Indians" from middling groups or junior elite fractions in the British population, seeking upward social mobility through risky wealth accumulation and military adventurism, built the empire on the ground. And they did so with at best grudging acceptance by the Establishment, and the ignorance or hostility of much of the British population. While arguably committed to the alleged virtues of efficiency, discipline and trade, EIC adventurers seemed far more concerned about personal power and enrichment, and finding illicit ways around blocked social opportunities – much like the organised criminals of later periods. Other EIC adventurers, such as Charnock and Childs, seem to be of a similar type to Clive, as do other early colonialists such as Cook and Cortes. They were not well-meaning liberals or disciples of Descartes or Kant. Nor were they interested in proving their own superiority at the expense of "the Other". European empires were built by greedy, aggressive risk-takers with little concern for "modern reason", often driven by desires for upward mobility within entrenched class systems. Bureaucrats took over later, partly to rein in the socially disruptive effects of the adventurist faction.

Bhabha's view of colonialism is a special case – an application – of Lacan's and Derrida's theory of how *all* language, meaning, and writing operate. Bhabha effectively *applies* Derridean theory to colonial texts. This has led to criticisms: what special purchase does Derridean theory have on colonial texts (Easthope, 1998b:344)? Similarly, Young suggests that the recognition that resistance occurred against colonialism renders Bhabha's psychoanalytic model unnecessary (1990:151). It is noticeable that the root theory applied

here is European. Postcolonial theory claims a Southern, or migrant/marginal, site of speech. Yet there are people in Southern ("Third World") countries who locally apply and reinterpret all kinds of academic and political perspectives, such as liberalism, Marxism, rational-choice theory or the ethnographic method. All of these arguably reinflect the theories in question from a non-western point of view. They are still seen as part of Eurocentric ideologies by critics such as Bhabha. Yet in many ways, Bhabha simply does with poststructuralism what Cardoso or Mao do with Marxism. He takes a European theory and applies it to non-western examples, modifying it somewhat in the process.

If postcolonial studies critiques the European 'subject', it nonetheless does so with a theory of subjectivity – of what subjectivity *really is* – which is thoroughly European. In order to avoid this conclusion, postcolonial theorists typically insist that they are not simply applying poststructuralism. The claim that postcolonial theory is not merely an application of poststructuralism stems largely from the claim *within* both theories that the repetition of a statement from a different standpoint alters the statement (for instance, by adding different background assumptions). But this seems to be "begging the question". Postcolonialism is only able to avoid being classified as "applied poststructuralism" through claims specific to poststructuralism. It is because it applies poststructuralism that it can deny that it applies poststructuralism!

Postcolonial theorists typically portray their theory as an immanent outgrowth of the colonial context. Yet they apply axioms, or foundational beliefs, which are imported from outside this context. These include for example the 'language model', the claim that all meanings are haunted by ambiguity, and the preference for subversion over antagonism. Bhabha applies these beliefs to colonial situations. But in his work, these claims are never tested in relation to the colonial context. They are assumed to be true in advance. Hence, claims regarding the co-dependence of the colonial context and postcolonial theory are misleading. In practice, Bhabha applies Lacanian/Derridean poststructuralism in an almost unaltered (though sometimes superficially understood) form to a set of colonial examples. Furthermore, his approach admits only two possibilities: naively accept binaries and all they entail, or accept the zone of ambiguity he sees as the only alternative. This choice arises from the prior poststructuralist axioms, not the colonial context. The posited truth of the Lacanian/Derridean model of subjectivity is independent of its application to colonialism, and is not seriously 'tested' in Bhabha's work. It is assumed to be true *a priori*, and nothing is advanced in defence of its truth. Instead, there are various implicit prohibitions around questioning this model – someone who does so is essentialist, colonial, naïve, humanistic, liberal, and so on. Yet the adequacy of this model as the best way to analyse colonialism and resistance to it, and even the implication that it is less 'western' or 'violent' than a neo-Marxist or a liberal reading, are asserted rather than shown.

Bhabha assumes – logically enough, given his Lacanian/Derridean ontology (see above, Chapter 2) – that the colonised *are in fact* what they appear to be for the coloniser. They are in fact what they are constructed as, through the colonial relationship. Power is productive, and creates the colonised as colonised. The possibility of misrepresentation, or of something inherent to the culture of the colonised which the coloniser can't reach or understand (for substantive reasons, not as a silence within the colonial relation), is effectively denied in advance. It is ruled out axiomatically, not empirically. Now, of course, many poststructuralists question the idea that people have any kind of fundamental inner being which could be misrepresented. They dismiss any objection to their theories on the grounds that discourse is misrepresentation as naïve. But the matter does not end there. Even if everything is discourse, then everything does not necessarily belong to a single, integrated discursive system (see above, 103-6). Discourse is never a continuous field, and the colonised engage in discourse amongst themselves as well as with colonisers. Something could therefore exist in the discourse of the colonised and outside their relationship to the colonisers, without being 'outside discourse' in a manner objectionable to poststructuralists. To take an example, indigenous groups might produce local knowledges. But they might keep these knowledges secret from colonisers, or colonisers might be completely uninterested in them. Such a situation is empirically possible, and is not ruled-out by poststructuralist axioms. Hence, the possibility of hidden transcripts cannot be wished away *a priori*.

Bhabha's analysis of colonialism also reveals the conservative implications of his theory. For Bhabha, colonialism is a case of fetishism, which is motivated by a desire for purity. The desire for purity (or disalienation) is the cause of most problems in a Lacanian worldview. This existential position provides the basis for most Lacanians' and Derrideans' pessimistic orientations. Life sucks; the idea that it can be better is an ego-fantasy; this fantasy causes totalitarianism, violence, colonisation; a wise man or woman instead just recognises and accepts the necessity of what is. This position is actually rather similar to religious positions (c.f. Paranjape, 2002; Choi and Black, 2008). Yet the claim that

colonialism is simply an effect of a universal human disposition to idealise purity and refuse the messy reality of life is pretty much unproven. It runs contrary to the tough-guy personas of figures like Robert Clive, and it makes little space for understanding the economic and political aspects of colonialism. The cost of this strategy is that one is also prohibited from liberationist viewpoints *contrary to* colonialism – such as Fanon's hopeful humanism. In a sense, one always remains postcolonial since colonialism cannot be cast aside – imagining it can be cast aside is just another illusion of purity.

There is a certain linguistic slippage in postcolonial terminology. Assertions or gestures by individual artists or scholars are taken to have affected entire systems of knowledge, which are taken to affect political realities in turn. For example, Bhabha might be said to have destabilised colonial binaries. What this means is that Bhabha asserts that these binaries are unstable, or maybe that he undermines them by pointing out ambivalences. But this way of phrasing suggests that he has also disrupted the *real* colonial binary, as it works in practice – both as a regime of knowledge, and a system of power. In this way, textual strategies are confused with political actions, and academic theories are confused with everyday discourses, and asserting something to be unstable is confused with actually breaking it down. Postcolonial theory is thus able to define itself in circular terms as having effectively produced certain effects, when these effects are achieved only if the

theory's premises are true. The entire circle is non-falsifiable, and never checked against actual effects. These effects are actually hamstrung by internal contradictions. Bhabha is able to suspend, but not overthrow, the colonial master-signifier. Indeed, his entire approach relies on retaining it as the point of reference and refusing any move to reject or pass beyond it. The Derridean 'to-come', by definition, never comes (see above, 304-8). Instead of engaging with the historical context of colonialism, postcolonial theory creates a limited theoretical plane of its own. This plane distracts from important issues both historically and today (Huddart, 2006:111). It can be counterposed to approaches based on affinity, which allow for forms of connection which are different from those Bhabha takes to be axiomatic.

Big general categories such as "coloniser" and "colonised" often overwrite differences within the categories. In any postcolonial society, there is a complex range of social groups and actors. There are often divisions between a 'traditional' elite complicit in colonial or pre-colonial power, and a 'modern' sector which uses modernist discourses. There might be subsistence and commodity sectors of the economy, large informal sectors, a 'restive youth stratum' drawn to revolt. Bhabha tends to ignore and quilt together all these groups, treating the elite hybrid as the representative figure.

In the Margins: Transmodernity and Affinity

The anarchist theory of ***affinity*** suggests that social connections can be reconfigured so that hierarchical structures no longer govern social relations. Rather, people can form small groups based on mutual trust, intimacy, or projects they have in common. Affinity is exemplified, for instance, by the utopian work *Bolo'Bolo* (P.M., 1983), in which most people live in small self-governing communities based on self-chosen

cultures, attachments, or forms of life. This kind of structure is counterposed to the structure of hierarchical power. In particular, Richard Day (2005) argues that affinity is an alternative to hegemony. By 'hegemony', he means the kind of structure which has a unifying identity or master-signifier at its core. It is not entirely clear whether Bhabha's approach requires a master-signifier. In practice, he seems to maintain but suspend the master-signifiers of colonialism. He keeps them as an absent centre of discourse while also focusing constantly on them, and never moving past them to a less hierarchical structure. His core theoretical axioms and the affects he values also have hegemonic aspects.

Affinity has different connotations for different authors. For insurrectionary anarchists such as Bonanno (1996:10) and the Invisible Committee (2008:41-2), it refers to the intense personal connection existing between people who both know each other intimately and have a common political project. It is rather similar to Turner's communitas (see above, 315). The liminal experience or integrating force of affinity in Bonanno's sense is the emotional effect of acting together. By taking direct action together, people are bound together by a common political “projectuality” - an energy projected into the future. Drawing on the practice of feminist consciousness-raising groups, Cathy Levine similarly argues that 'the revolution should be built on the model of friendships' (1979:7). Through horizontal connections which relieve feelings of powerlessness and “shittiness”, people can release flows of desire which are otherwise blocked by the system.

Other anarchists such as Wolfi Landstreicher (n.d.:4) and Hakim Bey (1994) talks about the importance of affinal relations based on connections other than those imposed by the system. By grouping together around their own

desires, struggles or projects, people become autonomous from capital and the state. The Red Sunshine Gang (1970) stress the importance of achieving a kind of active participation, rather than passivity or behavioural conditioning. The idea of affinity is also sometimes used to refer to a way of organising in which different groups are integrated through networks instead of hierarchies. People with similar concerns, beliefs, or tactics gather into "affinity groups" which coordinate social life either through delegates or indirectly. Each affinity group has autonomy in how it acts. Landstreicher suggests that '[t]he awareness each has of the others' individuality creates a basis where decision and action need not be separate' (2005: 21). Instead of relating to each other through social roles, people can relate to each other as unique beings (or bundles of flows) in the Stirnerian sense. Relationships based on affinity make it possible to communicate, even in contexts of radical difference, like the incommensurability theorised by Bhabha. Of course, the affinity model also depends on assumptions incompatible with Bhabha's beliefs in co-constitutivity and constitutive lack.

The theoretically important fact about affinity is that it provides a way of organising which does not rely on the dominant socio-linguistic structure as the primary tie among actors in groups. It allows a type of social organisation which is not reducible to master-signifiers, "castration" (disempowerment), lack, exclusionary co-constitutivity and so on. In modernity – and in Bhabha's theory – the us/them boundary is constitutive of identity. But in affinity-groups, bands, and "bunds" (see Robinson, 2018a), the us/them boundary is not constitutive (if it exists at all). Instead, the social group focuses on the network of energy at the core of the group – the lived connections it involves. People thus 'organize their social lives through focusing attention rather than referring it to a rigid structure' (Wilson, 1988:50).

There is evidence that this kind of social structure exists in autonomous social movements. For instance, Abby Peterson (2001) shows that these movements are integrated through intense liminal (inbetween) experiences in moments of political action. This allows them to function without strong normative or organisational connections. Similarly, evidence on band societies (Ingold, 1999; Bird-David, 1994) suggests that bands are able to create a kind of fusion which does not override individual differences. Bands can form, re-form and dissipate, and are connected on the basis of cooperative action or feelings of intimacy.

Similar concepts arise across a number of theoretical approaches – for example, in the work of Negri, Sartre, Guattari, and Bakhtin. One example is the Deleuzian concept of the rhizome. A rhizome is a type of network which connects between points through underground stems. It is different from a tree-like structure which joins everything to a central trunk. A world of rhizomes would be a world of connections which don't have any central trunk. People cluster around the things they desire or are drawn towards, and these different groups connect and interrelate at the points where they connect. The rhizome or affinity model is especially appropriate for movements of oppressed people.

However, the ways in which postcolonial theory interrelates positions tend not to be rhizomatic. In practice, the focus on deconstructing dominant meanings prevents horizontal relationships between different individuals, groups, or ideas. Instead, ideas are either juxtaposed without coming into contact, or arranged hierarchically depending on their strategic usefulness

for marginalised groups. Bhabha also talks about relying on traumatic wounds as the integrative force in social movements (see below, 915-20). Since this "grammar", or way of articulating different parts of a movement, depends on the existing social structure for its organising force, it is unable to pass through the moment of suspension into a different kind of life. This constitutive impossibility is mistaken within the theory for the extraordinary persistence of the structures it fights. In practice, political approaches similar to Bhabha's undermine the formation of affinity. Today's "identity politics" often involves the idea that incommensurability requires a kind of juxtaposition of claims without dialogue. Challenging others' claims is taken to be oppressive, and oppressed people are treated as "experts". This reinforces racial and gendered separations because it prevents the emergence of affinities across difference (Dot Matrix, n.d.:4).

The idea of affinity already overlaps with postcolonial concerns because of its similarity to indigenous group dynamics, particularly hunter-gatherer bands (c.f. Robinson and Tormey, 2009a, 2010). Another similarity arises in the theory of ***transmodernity*** or transmodernism. Transmodernity is distinct from, but similar to, the concept of affinity. The idea is mainly associated with the Argentinean liberation theologian Enrique Dussel. Transmodernity is counterposed to postmodernist and modernist ideas. It seeks to integrate modern, pre-modern, and postmodern ideas, and to revitalise and modernise tradition rather than overthrow it. It is thus a third alternative to the tradition/modernity binary which is so central to politics in the global South.

Transmodernism combines Marxist liberation issues with spirituality. It relies heavily on transpersonal psychology – the idea that people can relate to a level of existence at which each of us is not separate from others or from the universe. It also promotes global connections and exchanges, and valuing of difference and diversity, but on a horizontal rather than a hierarchical model. This horizontal approach to connection suggests that there are similarities between transmodernism, rhizomes

and affinity. It is opposed to imperialism and capitalism. Ecology and local neighbourhood life are seen as important. Transmodernity is pro-feminist but sometimes conservative on family issues.

Dussel calls for an intercultural dialogue which does not assume prior equality of cultures or rely on the global core or on 'experts' for its theoretical integration. He suggests that, for non-western people, it is important to study the texts or myths of one's own non-western culture before or alongside those of the west, and to value one's non-western tradition. One then engages in intercultural dialogue with other cultures, not exclusively with the west. The focus is on South-South connections. For example, Dussel brings Latin American movements into conversation with Islamic thought. In one of his early works, Walter Mignolo (2002) depicts transmodernity as a kind of transversal (cross-cutting) relationship among different experiences of modernity. Rather than using modernity as a trunk to connect the different localities, it seeks horizontal connections. Similarly, Dussel (1999) suggests that transmodernity is transversal. It involves a mutual liberation of postcolonial cultures. Every site, in spite of its abjection by the imperial core, is also a site of cultural renewal and invention. Every locality speaks to problems facing the whole world. Unlike postmodernity, transmodernity aspires to be a synthesis which moves decisively beyond modernity. I believe countercultural thought has a place in the transmodern conversation because it emerges as a resistance discourse, not part of the dominant text. Anarchist and autonomous “bunds” are necessarily “outside” the dominant society and are nascently at least, a new emergent culture. It is important to bring this emerging culture into conversation with other local traditions, rather than with global hierarchies or theories based on positionality.

Another difficulty – which affects Bhabha's analysis of colonialism as well as his general theory – is the persistence of transcendent categories. Bhabha, like Derrida, questions whether certain issues are ontological. However, he does not simply treat them as non-ontological. He continues to treat them as ontological 'under erasure'. For example, he still talks about the nature of identity, the subject, and so on, in general, universal terms. He does not reduce the level of language to situated subjects and situated identities. He treats it as having a universal transcendental structure. For example, stereotypes are given a certain reality as social roles and categories. They do not vary in their role across situations. Bhabha's accounts sometimes read like the "myths" studied by Roland Barthes (1972), in which abstract categories play out dramas among themselves which overwrite the concrete histories of concrete people. They also read a bit like what Stirner (2017/1845) terms "spooks", the idea that properties or attributes of people are more important than their other traits, or their uniqueness or flows of becoming. The way Bhabha talks about "the subject", "the colonised", "the coloniser", "ambivalence" and so on, suggests an interplay of mythical figures or spooks, rather than interactions among unique and historically situated human beings.

Bhabha is sometimes criticised for homogenising subaltern or colonised people. Bhabha uses a syntax which often treats 'the colonised' and 'the coloniser' as actors. Young argues that there is a problem in assuming a unitary colonial subject, or a pairing of coloniser and colonised. There is not a single colonial text, nor unitary actors. This is particularly the case if one accepts Bhabha's claim that the coloniser and colonised are complicit (1990:192). The problem with treating real historical processes as struggles among categories of signification is that it treats real people as equivalent expressions of abstract categories. Each actor is defined by a unitary position or function, as 'the colonised', 'the coloniser', 'the subaltern subject' and so on. These categories are treated as determinate – as more real than the concrete people who are acting – and not simply as empirical sets

into which people have been sorted. This is not far from the 'essentialism' which postcolonial authors otherwise criticise.

A comparison with Edward Saïd is here instructive. Like Bhabha's analysis, but also like Barthes's, Saïd's (1978) critique of Orientalism emphasises the ways in which Orientalist discourse short-circuits between high-level abstraction and specific, highly concrete facts. Orientalist, or colonial, discourse lacks a middle, analytical level (c.f. Pateman, 1975). Instead, it treats specific phenomena as expressing an essence, and thus, as existing outside their social and historical contexts. For Saïd, this gesture is typically colonial. It should be avoided in favour of approaches which pay more attention to local specificities. Bhabha's work, which inhabits and uses colonial categories, repeats the kind of gesture which Saïd finds objectionable in Orientalism. He reduces particular colonisers and colonised peoples to stereotypes of "the coloniser" and "the colonised", and repeats standardised analyses which are insensitive to particular situations. The resultant shadow-play of categories, of 'coloniser' versus 'colonised', looks disturbingly like a reversed version of the equally cookie-cutter confrontations posited by colonisers and racists (c.f. Barthes, 1997:103-9). It differs, of course, because of the assumption of ambiguity which Bhabha projects into all of the characters. However, the question remains of why the categories, and not concrete people or immanent social meanings, are the focus.

In the Margins: Edward Saïd's Orientalism

Edward Saïd was a Palestinian exile, an Arab Christian, and a US citizen. He was trained in western theory in the colonial education system. He is best-known for his classic work *Orientalism*, one of the earliest postcolonial texts, written in 1977. Saïd is influenced both by Foucault and Gramsci. In line with Foucault's theory, Saïd assumes that Orientalism in fact produces the "Orient" it imagines and constructs in its discourse. This "Orient" is not simply a misrepresentation. Orientalism Orientalises the "Orient", the Middle Eastern countries and peoples it classifies. Today, "Orientals" often "Orientalise" themselves through consumerism and the spread of western knowledge-systems. However, Orientalist ideas tend to persist regardless of whether they correspond to anything which exists in the Middle East. In line with Gramsci's theory, Saïd portrays Orientalism as a hegemonic, "leading" idea which provides cultural leadership within western societies. As a Foucauldian, Saïd does not believe that objective knowledge can exist. Scholarship should aim to be engaged rather than detached. Saïd emphasises the role of intellectuals as critics. He denies that there is any "real Orient" which he speaks for. However, he celebrates the creativity and struggles of peoples of the region.

The social science of Orientalism arises from a western binary. The west arbitrarily separates the world into east and west, as part of its justification for colonialism. Orientalism is a system of knowledge which corresponds to a regime of power. The east-west separation also helps to construct the west's own identity (as civilised, knowledgeable, etc). The "Orient" is an

excessively broad category encompassing (among others) the Islamic world, India and China (though Saïd focuses on the Middle East). Orientalism responds more to western culture and politics than to its supposed object, the people and places of the "Orient". It establishes a set of ways of writing, researching and thinking which seem correct. Writers then refer mainly to these aspects of the "field", rather than the "real Orient". Orientalist ideology is reproduced by scholars who mainly refer to one another, and if they visit the "Orient", they do so in predefined roles. They claim a standpoint from which they can survey, legislate for, and make general claims about the "Orient".

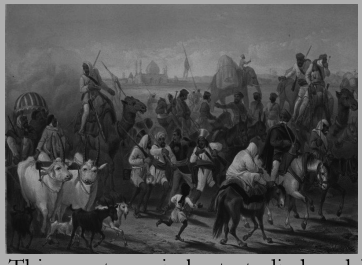
According to Saïd, Orientalism is a discourse or episteme (i.e. a regime of knowledge). It rests on the idea that the west is superior to "the Orient" - which for Saïd, means mainly the Islamic world. "The Orient" is primarily an idea, rather than a place. Orientalism restricts and controls the type of statements people can make about "the Orient" in the west. The discourse, rather than individual authors, has come to determine much of what is said. No scholar can resist the power of the discourse within which s/he works. (There is, however, a great deal of nuance and difference in the approaches taken by different authors, which Saïd recognises).

Scholars who believe they are engaging in objective scholarship are often unconsciously affected by this discourse. It produces particular biases in their scholarship. Similarly, travellers in the "Orient" seeking authentic experiences often carry within them aspects of this discourse. It affects what they can see and feel. People reproduce racist, imperialist and ethnocentric ideas without even knowing it. These ideas are not always explicitly imperial, but even the seemingly innocuous ones (such as Romantic praise of the Orient, or travellers seeking to "discover themselves" or escape European rigidities) carry the fiction of "the west"

and "the Orient" as separate categories. This separation is a "supreme fiction" which organises emotions such as hatred and fear – for example, responses to 9/11 or the Gulf War. It is promoted in both latent and manifest forms. The manifest forms are those of scholarship, politics, news coverage, and fiction. For example, coverage of terrorism and war in the Middle East frequently uses Orientalist stereotypes. It is alarmist and reductive. Latent Orientalism is Saïd's name for the series of (usually unquestioned) assumptions which underpin the manifest expressions.

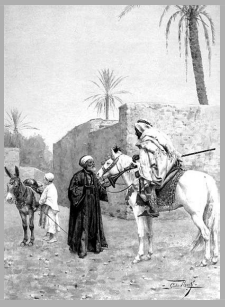
Saïd claims that knowledge is always produced in particular political traditions. Knowledge of the Orient was produced in colonial conditions – and it is tainted by colonialism. Orientalism was created primarily as a way to dominate and reshape the "Orient". Nineteenth century scholars were aware that their interest in the region was not entirely impartial. Beginning with Napoleon, and extending to US security studies today, Orientalists are directly hired to work on imperialist projects. Europeans resident in Asia in the colonial period were always taken as representatives of Europe or of European countries. Also, the political "us versus them" cleavage is definitive of the Orientalist field of study. This does not necessarily mean that all forms of knowledge are also forms of domination.

However, western knowledge of the "Orient" was heavily affected by the



imperial nature of European societies. Many classical Orientalists reinforced stereotypes by creating racial classifications and hierarchies. They believed that past Oriental civilisations had a greatness absent from the present Orient. This greatness is best studied and known by westerners. Europeans are able to restore the Orient's greatness. Some Orientalists believed they were rescuing the Orient from obscurity, or recognised Eastern knowledge as an important

but transcended origin of western thought. These kinds of beliefs no longer define "Oriental" area studies, but they still influence its basic parameters. Saïd traces particular themes and tropes (recurring figures) from the early, explicitly colonial texts up to the 1970s. He shows that some of the old colonial ideas still retain their force, and still justify imperialist politics.



Orientalism has a number of features. It treats the Orient, Orientals, Arabs, Islam, the "Arab psyche", the "Islamic type of society" and so on, as essences. These essences are taken to be timeless and eternal. They are unchanging, and are not affected by history or society. In Orientalist interpretation, actual events and people are reduced to these static categories. Differences between east and west are played up and exaggerated. Similarities between east and west, and differences between times and places in "Oriental" societies, are ignored or downplayed. All things "Oriental" are approached through generalities, abstractions, and timeless essences. Any individual one might encounter in the "Orient" is identified with a general type, the "Oriental". Any event is read as a sign of the Oriental essence and its difference from the west. The practice of Orientalism does not enlarge knowledge, but simply repeats the same assumptions. The sweeping generality, ahistorical essentialism, and cultural hostility of Orientalism persist, even as its other aspects change – for example, as knowledge of ancient languages is replaced by schematic application of social science theories.

Orientalism relies mainly on a series of "figures" or "tropes". Saïd says that these figures are to real "Orientals" what stylised costumes are to dramatic characters. They are exaggerated representations which do not even aspire to accuracy. The stereotypes listed by Saïd can be summarised as follows.

Orientals are believed to be radically other – "not like us" – and inferior. They are prone to violence and irrationality, gullible, lazy, cunning, sadistic, peculiar, primitive, prone to flattery and trickery, and unconcerned about logic and science. They are often portrayed in terms of almost sexual outbursts of emotion, and as prone to rhetoric and excitement rather than reason. "Orientals" such as Arabs are often depicted in "masses", displaying apparently irrational emotions. This irrationality makes the Orient a site of danger to the west. Stereotypical Orientals are also traditionalist, and resistant to change. They are incapable of systematic, classificatory, law-like generalisation. They are ultra-conservative and irrationally loyal to their group, or else radical and dangerous. Everything in their life is infected by religion, so that ordinary social facts take on an unusual significance, as "Oriental" or "Islamic" facts.

Cartoon depicting Islamist attacks in France

The relationship of the Orient to the west is often definitive of Orientalist views of the Orient. The Orient is treated as analogous to past, inferior periods of western history. Modernity is alien to the Orient and needs to be promoted from outside. (In practice, the classification of local tendencies into "traditional" and "modern" categories has had major effects within colonised cultures). The Orient is always "like" some aspect of the west. But it is also powerful and threatening. Oriental men are sexually predatory and disgusting, women are sensual and available (a male power fantasy). Minorities are vulnerable and need to be protected by westerners. Peace and logic are not values for "Orientals". What is aberrant for "us" is normal for "them". Oriental politics are despotic, religious-inflected, demagogic, and backward. Religion, politics, and culture are improperly intertwined. Unrest in the "Orient" is attributed to extremism, hatred (e.g. anti-Semitism) or irrational passions, never to imperialism or Israeli aggression.

These stereotypes extend to politics. Oriental leaders are prophetic rather than rational. Most are seen in the west as false prophets. Because Orientals are manipulable by these false leaders, they cannot exercise self-determination. They cannot even represent themselves within Orientalist social science. Instead, they need to be represented by academics. In Orientalist discourse, colonialism results from and is justified, not by military power, but by superior knowledge, including the west's knowing the Orient better than it knows itself. However, military power is considered necessary because of Oriental "irrationality". This series of claims leads to the concealment of the human and social reality of life in "the Orient", as well as social, economic and historical dynamics. The actions of people classified as "Orientals" are explained by their being "Orientals", not their class interest, politics, humanity, etc. This means, among other things, that the effects of colonialism are concealed and that different people's lives are homogenised. For instance, Palestinians resisting Israeli land grabs are described in terms of the "return of Islam" or irrational hatred. Orientalists are also unable to discuss, and uninterested in discussing individuals. In Orientalist discourse, Orientals are not seen as fully human. This encourages westerners to believe they have a right to all the world's resources.

Saïd views Orientalism as a particularly closed, ahistorical type of scholarship. Orientalist scholars necessarily place themselves outside the field they study. They do not interact with the perspectives of "Orientals". Nor do they write for "Oriental" readers. Orientalist scholarship tends to confirm and apply, rather than add to, test or qualify, the pool of stereotypes. Orientalists select examples which confirm their biases. If an example deviates from their biases, it might be taken as an example of the essential eccentricity of Orientals. According to Saïd, the west sees itself as the observer and judge of the Orient. In some ways, Saïd's arguments prefigure the later tendency to seek latent discursive prejudices behind apparently innocent actions. His book is influential in cultural studies, but has attracted vicious

attacks from Orientalist scholars who claim it is anti-western and unnecessarily "politicises" their discipline. Some of these critics accuse Saïd of replacing academic standards with political standards in the field, or of oversimplifying the nature of Orientalist scholarship. For example, Nikki Keddie (1995), a former ally of Saïd, expresses concern that "Orientalism" has become a snarl-world in the field, used to shut down political disagreement.

Saïd does not believe that all western knowledge is imperialist. He carefully distinguishes between the self-aggrandising knowledge-systems of Orientalism and other forms of knowledge which seek understanding and analysis for its own sake, or which rests on compassion for the times and places studied. Some humanities are influenced at least as much by their "object" of study as by the culture of origin; Orientalism is objectionable because this is not, contingently, the case. Even ethnocentrism, which is common to most societies, is not objectionable in itself. Saïd would not, therefore, embrace the scattershot denunciations of "western knowledge" common today. For him, is not the case that all knowledge is tainted by colonial power, and Saïd is sympathetic to anthropology in particular. Orientalism is also not comparable to the study of Ancient Greece, partly because classicists are not called upon to aid government strategy. Only in studies of the Arab world has area studies remained in the mould of classical Orientalism. Even works on India and China have largely escaped it accord to Saïd. I would argue that disciplines like security studies, abnormal psychology, neoclassical economics, and criminology often function in a manner similar to Orientalism. They are consciously complicit in particular regimes of power, constitute an observed "object" with which there is little dialogue, and frequently reproduce stereotypes. However, many arts, humanities, social sciences and natural sciences conform to Saïd's criteria for legitimate knowledge-production.

Rather than seeking to subvert all meaning and knowledge, Saïd calls for libertarian, non-manipulative, non-repressive ways of studying other cultures. He argues that representation is necessary in order for human society to exist. However, opportunities need to be provided for those who are represented to intervene in the process, rather than being spoken about authoritatively by others. Representations are always intertwined

with the social position and discourse of those who represent. There are no purely "true" representations. All representations are partial. However, some misrepresentations or partial representations are worse than others. Like Fanon, Saïd is a self-professed humanist. He advocates individuality and subjective intuition, which he counterposes to received authority and beliefs. Saïd is also not a culturalist like Bhabha. For Saïd , wars do not happen because of stereotypes. They happen because of economics and geopolitics. Orientalism facilitates such wars, rather than causing them.

Saïd has also written a number of other works dealing with Palestine, media representations of Islam, and the relationship between imperialism and culture. His book *Culture and Imperialism* consists of a series of pieces dealing mainly with the relationship between famous novels and imperialism. In a string of journalistic pieces, Saïd writes passionately about Israeli atrocities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the treatment of civilians as enemy combatants, and the targeting of everyday buildings, farms and roads as "terrorist infrastructure". He shows how Israel frames Palestinians through a security lens which takes away their humanity and legitimises measures bordering on genocide. It is clear in Saïd's journalism that he does not view westerners or Israelis as evil and racist. Rather, he sides with the 'Other America' and the 'Other Israel' which oppose imperialism.

Saïd is critical of the dominant regimes in the Arab world. He complains about the use of his work to support essentialist nationalist or Islamic movements and to frame "the West" as the enemy. He disagrees with the idea of a conflict between two monolithic blocs. He is also critical of the Palestinian PLO leadership and of Hamas. He was a member of the Palestinian National Council, the ruling body of the PLO, until the early 1990s, when he quit in opposition to the Oslo agreement. At one point,

Saïd came under attack from right-wingers for throwing a stone at the Israeli border fence in Lebanon. He also took part in an orchestra which united Israeli and Palestinian musicians. This type of bridge-building initiative was common during the peace process in the 1990s. It is a lot less common today, as divisions have hardened and Israeli performers are often boycotted. Palestinian activists today argue that bridge-building activities are often used to legitimise the Israeli state and its actions, and to establish a false image of equivalence between the two "sides". However, activities like Saïd's are still encouraged if they involve "anti-colonial" Israelis.

Bhabha has referred to *Orientalism* as the work which has most influenced him. However, some of Bhabha's supporters believe he has moved beyond Saïd. According to them, Bhabha's obscure prose gives Orientalists no means to counter-critique his work, and his theory of language is more sophisticated. Saïd uses Foucault's theory of discourse and power/knowledge, but he is largely uninterested in the general structure of language or the supposedly necessary co-constitution of self and other. He is more interested in concrete instances of "othering" and

misrepresentation. In contrast with Bhabha, Saïd engages in detail, both with the bodies of knowledge produced by Orientalist scholars, and with changes in Orientalism over time. For example, he shows how Orientalism began as a mainly scholarly and aesthetic interest, but was increasingly politicised as colonialism expanded. Saïd rejects the idea that large, general claims can be made about broad categories such as "the Orient". Despite Saïd's scepticism about truth, he still posits a difference between this kind of sweeping generalisation and more accurate or responsible scholarship. In contrast, Bhabha makes general claims about groups such as "the colonised". Since objects are effects of categories, the operation of large colonial abstractions is taken to mean these abstractions really exist. Bhabha also tends to talk about westerners and colonisers in terms of homogenising stereotypes, as if all westerners have the same psychological complexes and all actions by westerners can be read in the same way. This is similar to how Saïd says Orientalists portray "Orientals", although the specific tropes and stereotypes are different. Despite their disagreement on the issue of "humanism", Saïd views Bhabha's work as a contribution to exposing the traps laid by colonialism.

Bhabha's approach, like Derrida's, arguably suspends and retains colonialism at its limit-point, rather than leading to its breakdown. Such ironisation is not necessarily overthrow. Discussing the end of the Western, Richard Slotkin (2008a, 2008b) draws a distinction between the breakdown of a myth and its ironisation. Critiques, satire, irony and inversion do not cause breakdown. At most, they signal its decline. This happened to Westerns in the 1970s. When a myth breaks down, people just stop using the myth. It no longer seems interesting or meaningful. Its symbolism no longer works. The collapse of a myth breaks its line of cultural transmission. Its symbols cease to be continuously recognisable, except to scholars (2008a). Works like Bhabha's thus perform an ambivalent function of their

own. They ironise the myths of modernity, but, in the process, they keep these myths interesting and meaningful. It might be said that, rather than passing beyond what he critiques, Bhabha gets stuck in the process of critique and irony, reinforcing the underlying myth (c.f. Žižek, 2002).

Despite his complex prose, Bhabha still has a basic underlying theory. This theory, like other theories, affects what he can see and how he interprets ambiguous events. For example, Bhabha has a recurring bias towards interpreting disagreements as reflections of underlying textual ambiguity. If colonisers, for instance, are torn between narcissism and paranoia, this is taken to reflect the internal ambiguity of the colonial text. But it may be that the multiple positions Bhabha sees as internal contradictions are in fact contending positions of different social actors. For instance, there is often a conflict among colonisers between those maintaining strong stereotypes and permanent subordination, and those aspiring to 'modernise' the 'natives'. These positions typically reflect the interests, on the one hand of colonial entrepreneurs, adventurers, and settlers, and on the other of bureaucrats and developers (see above, 522-39). The simplifying, decontesting effects of Bhabha's theory render such alternative explanations impossible, and arguably conceal as much as they reveal.

Bhabha's focus on textuality also leads to a tendency to ignore the separation of different subjects. Bhabha writes as if the colonised as a set of actual people, the colonised as a category used to classify these people, and the colonised as a figure in written colonial texts are equivalent. The possibility that the representation of the colonised is discontinuous with the ways the colonised see themselves is ruled out in advance. The real, outer 'other' is reduced to, or conflated with, the inner, psychological Other. If one accepts the Lacanian/Derridean viewpoint that real people's identities are simply products of language, language is a closed totality aside from its inner ambiguity, and 'the subject' is simply an effect of the gap within language (see above, 139-40), then this conflation is arguably both necessary and unproblematic. If, however, there is any reality to the distinction among subjects, or anything irreducible to the combined field of language and its disavowed, then it is a dangerous, repressive move. It imposes western categories in colonial contexts. For Bhabha, it seems, everyone is within 'Oedipus', or the regime of power defined by the Lacanian master-signifier. This is in contrast to Deleuze and Guattari's (1983) insistence that Oedipus is specific to western culture. The specificity of colonialism is arguably underplayed. Colonial trauma is not recognised as a specific soul-wounding arising from colonialism (see Duran and Duran, 1995); it is a special case of the primal trauma of representation. But what if there are also non-Oedipal subjective systems among colonised peoples? The distinctness of colonised peoples is elided in their reduction to colonial categories. As a result, Bhabha misses the position of subaltern groups as never entirely *within* colonial and Oedipal relations – and hence, never entirely within the capitalist axiomatic. He admits they are never entirely inside colonialism – but only in the sense that they express the colonial text's constitutive, internal ambivalence. He thus subtly reproduces a variety of colonial logic by insisting they are entirely, irreducibly inside the Derridean/Lacanian-defined functioning of language.

Responding to this kind of critique, Bhabha is also careful to note that one cannot read off other cultures from the functioning of the semiotic system (LC, 70). In other words,

the status of the colonised as Other tells us little about their own cultures or identities. The issue of the identity of the colonised is simply beyond Bhabha's account. This disclaimer is misleading, however, as Bhabha also frequently makes claims about the experiences of the colonised, the subaltern, the migrant and so on (often treated in practice as unitary positions). In a related line of criticism, Huddart objects, firstly, that academic theories have far less impact on colonialism than Bhabha assumes. The fact that there is no fixed identity of colonisers did not prevent colonisers from acting as if there was. Secondly, the experience of uncanny, displaced, hybrid, anxious relationships to others and to the land is an imposed effect of the colonial experience. It is not something that (for example) Australian Aboriginal people chose, or developed as resistance, but an effect of colonial violence (Huddart, 2006:44). I believe that Huddart has a point that the lack of grounded identity can be experienced as vulnerability, disposability, social non-existence, or anxiety. Bhabha does not engage with pre-colonial beliefs or identities at all, and so cannot theorise the experience of loss. I would also add that, from an Andean perspective, western culture is itself marked by this lack of grounding (Burman, 2009, 2010). In the Andes, Europeans are viewed as *qala* – people stripped of their roots and connections. In assuming such alienation to be ontologically constitutive, Bhabha contributes to making the whole world *qala*.

Critique: Mimicry

Several critics see Bhabha's position on identity as reflecting elite fluidity. There are recurring criticisms that Bhabha and postcolonial theory paint a picture of intercultural fluidity which in fact is only accessible to elite migrants such as Bhabha. To take some

examples, Huddart suggests that people can subvert identities, wear them ironically or tear them off, only if they are secure and privileged (2006:47). Ahmad similarly objects that people are not actually free to refashion their identities or communities out of the 'infinitely contingent' (1995:16). Araeen argues that Bhabha's mimic men are usually an intermediary social group, not the oppressed majority. Elite 'native collaborators' occupy the inbetween position Bhabha glorifies, and use this position to perpetuate colonial power (2000:17). Hallward argues that cosmopolitan, intercultural play is only accessible to transnational elites (2001:23). And Parry argues that Bhabha takes his own position of elite migrant identity as definitive of marginalised subjectivity in general (1994:21).

I feel this line of critique is overplayed. Bhabha does not argue that people can simply redefine themselves any way they want. He argues that the categories imposed by the linguistic structure can be subverted and reconfigured. The objection is thus a straw-man argument. A defensible version of the objection would be that less-privileged people are less able to perform such transformations. However, I believe this is inaccurate. People from insecure, underprivileged groups can and do subvert and hybridise their identity-categories, sometimes as part of their survival strategies. For example, people in African countries sometimes register multiple times for state programmes, or alternatively, avoid registering to remain invisible. People from poor backgrounds might also wear counterfeit designer goods in an attempt to capture the spiritual power of the wealthy (Hecht and Simone, 1994). And of course, people involved in informal and illicit activities often create multiple identities to avoid detection. It is arguable that it is actually harder for privileged people to shed identities than underprivileged people, since their systemic connections are often more entrenched.

This said, mimicry seems particularly common among the elite strata of colonised peoples. Inbetweenness is arguably more characteristic of colonial middlemen and elite collaborators than it is of colonised populations in general. This has led to disparate responses to Bhabha's position. According to Chakrabarti, mimicry begins as a strategy or desire of the coloniser. The coloniser desires that the colonised be like him. However, it is transformed into a strategic desire of the colonised. It is subverted from a source of disadvantage to a source of advantage (2012:15). This effectively affirms Bhabha's account. On the other hand, Han criticises Bhabha's view of mimicry as beautifying the complicity of the colonial elite. It is only those with the privilege to learn the coloniser's discourses who can be mimics. Bhabha's theory is 'self-congratulatory' for this group, and gives them a 'clear conscience'. It turns a 'meager discomfort' into a 'noble act of resistance' (Han, 2005:7). In support of Bhabha, Wesley Shumar uses the example, from Brayboy's research, of Native American students who use dominant forms of knowledge for the collective improvement of their groups, rather than for personal advancement (2010:502). He suggests that this is a type of mimicry on Bhabha's model. However, this also seems to me to be a question of elite complicity, albeit for progressive goals. An educated minority absorb a dominant culture for socially beneficial purposes.

Bhabha assumes that the point of contact between cultures is a space of radical transformation. Yet such transformation may not always serve to empower the colonised

or to break down fixed categories. What if the 'Third Space' is not the liminal zone, but the space of recuperation - the space in which a line of flight is brought back into the dominant system? In Situationism and in Deleuzian theory, the line of flight (or *détournement*) is something which leads outside - into the field of becoming, or into a different world. The moment where the line of flight is rendered translatable with the existing system is often the moment it is captured, and its radicalism drained. In colonial contexts, such a process might cut off both the untranslatable 'other', and any lines of flight which arise from social movements.

Empirical evidence supports the view that mimicry aids colonial power. Take for instance Edward Steinhart's (1978) study of colonisation in the kingdoms of Bunyoro, Ankole and Toro (now in western Uganda). In all three cases, despite varying levels of resistance and collaboration, the colonial takeover was facilitated by the rise of a new local elite. This elite sought victory in local power conflicts, and thus collaborated with western invaders to strengthen its own position. It was different from the conservative old guard. In particular, it stood out for its 'ability to operate between two cultural and political traditions', its 'ability to cross back and forth between the local and the foreign' (1978:208). It was this ability which sustained collaboration in the west Ugandan kingdoms, and elsewhere in Africa. In other words, hybridity is a feature, not of anti-colonial resistance, but of a comprador elite which used its multiple literacies to benefit from colonial rule. The benefit of any ambivalence usually went to the colonisers. Like Bhabha, Steinhart also talks about sly civility – solemn agreements which Europeans took seriously but Africans felt able to ignore. However, Europeans had a habit of enforcing their readings, and sly civility provided no safeguard against such enforcement (1978:267-8). Similarly, according to Slotkin, US counterinsurgency policy is always looking for the counterpart. This is a type of local who acts, thinks, and tries to be like an American, but who remains a local (2008c). This type of mimic is not subversive of the fantasy-frame of the Western and of counterinsurgency, but continuous with it.

This said, hybridity is not by any means exclusive to elites. Processes of hybridisation and juxtaposition also happen in everyday life – food takeaways, rap music, everyday conviviality (Gilroy, 2004) and so on. Yet in such contexts, they often occur in ways which involve commodification, appropriation and the silencing of trauma. It is hard to imagine, for instance, that a white person buying an Indian takeaway or watching a Disney version of a Chinese legend will be confronted by the disjunction of colonialism or experience a collapse of binary oppositions. It is perhaps as well, therefore, that Bhabha does not try to extend his analysis to everyday examples. But it must be remembered that these kinds of examples are far more common and culturally influential than the limited-consumption artworks that provide most of Bhabha's examples.

Another line of critique treats mimicry as absorption into the discourse it mimics. For Nietzsche, mimicry involves submission to a conquering race and recognition of a debt towards it. 'The transition is effected by those widespread slave and serf populations which have adapted themselves to the divine cult of their masters, whether through compulsion or through submissiveness and *mimicry*' (1996:70). For Nietzsche, therefore, mimicry is not resistance to colonisation, but rather, internalisation of colonial power. It is a gesture of submission to the colonial master, which helps to convert a contingent military conquest into a morally-binding, existential debt. This is consistent with practices of downward imitation, which often reflect the prestige of the powerful and the stigmatised status of the oppressed. Throughout the world, people copy more-privileged

groups at the expense of their own culture – from working-class imitation of lifestyles shown in advertisements, to the sale of skin whitening products in Africa, to the phenomena of "Sanskritisation" in India – the imitation of "higher" by "lower" castes. Such cases demonstrate how mimicry can be subordination, or at least reinforce a dominant structure even while reshuffling positions within it.

Re-reading and reinterpretation are also not limited to marginalised groups. Powerful groups can reinterpret established rules or discourses in ways which increase their power. A good example is "substitutionism". This is a term coined by Trotsky in an early criticism of Lenin, and later used to refer to Stalinism and sometimes to vanguard parties in general. It refers to a situation where a revolutionary party claims to represent the working class. But in fact, it substitutes for the working class. It simply defines whatever is in the interests of the party as being in the interests of the working class. This can lead to situations where actually-existing workers are defined as bourgeois or counter-revolutionary. It provides a basis for a bureaucracy to take power and dominate the working class.

A related issue is "judicial activism". Progressive scholars sometimes praise the ability of judges to reinterpret laws in unforeseen ways so as to expand human rights and aid the worse-off. But it's just as common for reactionary judges to re-read laws in unexpected reactionary ways. There have been cases in recent years of judges interpreting protest as "public nuisance" or "blackmail", copyright violation as "fraud", humanitarian relief as "people trafficking", and gradually expanding the scope of terrorism laws, to take a few examples. In these cases, new reactionary laws can effectively be created without parliamentary process or public debate. People charged under the reinterpreted laws can be charged retroactively for things they had no way of knowing would be redefined as a crime. Such re-reading is not in any way emancipatory. It is part of the process of building a police state.

In another kind of critique, Hardt and Negri (2000) argue that we are no longer in a colonial or modern world. Rather, we are in a distinct postmodern world they characterise as 'Empire'. This system is smooth and self-reproducing. It no longer relies on rigid categories and hierarchies. It relies on cybernetic exploitation of immanent social networks. Approaches which continue to flog the dead horse of modernity are actually functional for Empire. They help Empire to disguise its existence and to break down the resistance it faces from earlier social forms. Hardt and Negri believe that poststructuralist theory resonates with and reproduces neoliberalism and the lifestyle of its elite. For example, playful reconfigurations of identity and amoral strategic flexibility are important neoliberal positions. From Hardt and Negri's point of view, theorists such as Bhabha are actually symptomatic of postmodern capitalism (2000:145). Hardt and Negri argue that global power has evacuated the site poststructuralists and postcolonial theorists are attacking. Neoliberal capitalism no longer relies on binary oppositions. At best, Bhabha is attacking yesterday's power structures, fighting yesterday's battles against Fordism and political colonialism. At worst, he is aiding neoliberal capitalism in its dismantling of fixed structures, educating people to 'survive' and thus sustain this regime by accepting precarity, disposability, meaninglessness and placelessness.

Similarly, Dirlik argues that Bhabha has little to say about today's colonial ideologies. He focuses mainly on historical forms of colonial ideology. This limits his relevance to today's issues (1994a:356). A similar view that the 'new times' of postmodernity actually entail deeper changes than postcolonial theory can handle is also suggested by other theorists. According to Baudrillard (1983, 1993, 1994), capitalism is now saturated. It does not have a colonial frontier. Instead, it is imploding from within. The cybernetic model of power which underpins neoliberal capitalism is very different from the classical master-slave dialectic. It positively thrives on aleatory (chance-based) processes. A strategy like

Bhabha's, which aims to destroy older self/other relations, misses the point and helps to sustain the illusion that political life still has stakes like it used to. For Virilio (2000), the current world system is 'endocolonial'. Forms of power developed to control colonial populations have been brought back to colonise the formerly imperial countries themselves. For example, counterinsurgency models developed in Malaya, Vietnam and Iraq are being used against social movements in America and Europe (Yaffe, 2000). The focus on the relationship between coloniser and colonised, as a binary relationship, conceals the ways in which colonisation has enveloped the whole social field. It hides the endocolonial relationship between the neoliberal elite or the impersonal cybernetic system and civilians worldwide, by focusing on racial and national divisions *within* the oppressed population.

Whether or not these views of changed conditions are accurate, they point to an important strategic limit to Bhabha's work. Bhabha has identified some of the tactics and orientations which destabilised the colonial regime-type. However, he tells us little of a precise nature about this regime-type. Finding gaps and weaknesses in the opportunity structure of a regime-type may well be crucial in undermining it. However, one needs to be able to say why this particular strategy is effective in this particular place and time. Bhabha generally fails to provide this degree of precision. He treats similar tactics of ambiguity-formation as if they are effective in all places and times, or at least, in any 'colonial' regime broadly defined. This does not necessarily follow. What works against one regime-type may not work against another. It is necessary to assess whether neoliberalism and classical colonialism are relevantly similar, or relevantly different.

The focus on colonialism as the main site of oppressive discourse is also problematic. Arguably, oppressive forms of power similar to those of colonialism already operated in earlier hierarchical regimes. For example, forms of state power historically exercise similar structures of fixity, while nationalisms (including anti-colonial nationalisms) pursue similar binaries. It has been argued that colonialism is simply the extension outwards of the ethnocidal impulse already exercised internally by the modern state (Perlman, 1984; Clastres, 1994). Bhabha chooses to focus on 'western modernity' and colonialism, rather than capitalism, statism, patriarchy, and so on. But postcolonial theory rarely does much work to establish this primacy. The emphasis on one oppression may undermine engagement with others. This problematic emphasis on colonialism over other oppressions is especially problematic if one follows the analyses of Hardt and Negri or Dirlik, in which neoliberal capitalism is fundamentally different from classical colonialism.

Bhabha's approach to colonialism can be criticised from a wide range of perspectives. The use of textuality (and a Derridean or Lacanian reading of signification) as the root-metaphor through which to understand colonialism is particularly controversial. Materialist critics object that colonialism is about economic exploitation and/or political violence,

and only secondarily about textuality or signification (see below, 890-907). In a critique of Bhabha's position, Peter Hallward argues that colonialism is primarily dispossession and violence. It is not about negotiation and interstices (2001:xv). He suggests that postcolonial theory denies the existence of a political centre (2001:xv). It acts as if it transcends location in a 'self-regulated' way - by its own determination. In fact, colonialism is based on centralised power. Similarly, Xie argues that Bhabha regrettably brackets out the violence of colonialism. Bhabha focuses on colonialism's signifying aspects, and neglects its power (1996:162). For example, Bhabha does not address the fact that colonialism destroyed earlier, indigenous modes of production (1996:163). In a critique of Bhabha's fellow postcolonial theorist Valentin Mudimbe, Lazarus (2005) argues that the use of textuality as a root-metaphor for colonial violence is flawed. Colonial processes are more often economic than textual. To take an example, peasants in the Himalayas were self-sufficient prior to colonialism. Today, after years of dispossession for timber plantations, they depend on food imports (Guha, 2000).

This leads to criticisms of Bhabha's treatment of colonial history. For example, Hallward embraces Bhabha's critique of continuous, linear history. However, he objects to Bhabha's alternative of a single, non-relational field of difference or ambiguity (2001:24). He suggests that Bhabha escapes from the grip of any situated position only to return every time to a single logic which conditions every possibility (2001:26). This rather spoils the point of escaping from situated positions to begin with. For Bhabha, the colonial process is an inevitably unsuccessful attempt to fix identity. Postcolonialism is an equally inevitable return to the moment of enunciation (i.e. the process of deferring and reproducing meaning). This means that politics and culture blur into a single continuum. Oppressive systems seem to be undone by their own performance. Political change does not require conflict or mass mobilisation. It requires interpretive finesse (2001:26). Hallward's main objection to this view is that political 'Events' are denied in advance. He endorses Badiou's idea of an 'Event' – such as the Russian Revolution – as an eruption from a void in the situation, which ruptures the ongoing process of signification. He also objects that

Bhabha's model seems to deny the possibility of an endlessly ongoing or decisively genocidal colonisation. Derridean theory predicts that a text must always remain ambiguous – but colonialism sometimes succeeds in constructing stable systems of power, or in wiping out entire groups of people.

Similarly, Perloff argues that history and chronology are of little interest to Bhabha. They are undermined by the fragmentary nature of time (2001:114). Bhabha objects to being called ahistorical in his accounts of Indian politics, because according to him, he talks about 'the printing industry', 'missionaries', the 'quasi-state governance of the East India Company' and so on. He puts down this complaint to his refusal of narrative history, maintaining that pieces like 'By Bread Alone' are thoroughly historical. They are just not presented in an 'easily continuous', 'conjoined' or generalised way (SPD, 390). In other words, he objects that he is called ahistorical because his history is not linear. He refuses to provide a Marxist kind of history, or a liberal kind of history, and this is all his critics object to.

Against this rebuttal, I feel the criticisms are basically valid. It's not the lack of narrative history or linear history that is the problem, it's the lack of specificity regarding historical actors and their motives. Firstly, Bhabha consistently uses historical episodes as foils for the *general* relationship between coloniser and colonised, conceived in terms of the split nature of language. Peasants in 'By Bread Alone', elite-level 'mimic men', refugee artists, Algerian revolutionaries, are all engaged in exactly the same kind of subversion of colonial reason. It is as if they timelessly repeat the same eternal slippage of the signifier, and their context makes no difference. Secondly, Bhabha *does not* talk in specific terms about the actors in these incidents. The peasants exchanging chapatis in 'By Bread Alone' may as well have been traders, workers or soldiers; nothing of their specific peasant conditions or worldview comes through. The text ignores the wider field of peasant studies and its theorising of peasant history. Hence, Bhabha assumes the impenetrability of the signifier for the coloniser reflects its impenetrability *as such* - against the grain of peasant studies accounts of similar episodes as reflecting a hidden transcript. The progressive power of marginal groups also resides in these groups' significance *for the dominant group*. Oppressed people are effectively instrumentalised for a wider theoretical project. The point is to incite "us" to think 'beyond theory' (LC, 181). It is only because they aid this process of ego-decomposition and sublimation of suffering that Bhabha attaches value to marginalised people.

Another problem is that Bhabha's focus on deconstructing colonial identities and egos is more-or-less apolitical. It appears to produce progressive effects because it empowers oppressed subjects. In practice, however, there is little evidence for such political effects. For example, provocative attacks on 'white male' egos by identity-politics activists might produce affects of panic and paranoia, but the political effects are often reactionary. Paranoid white men are driven into the arms of the far right. Being identified in terms of the 'paranoid' pole of colonial discourse – for example, as an extremist or insurgent to be crushed, rather than an exotic instance of diversity – is not necessarily a victory. It simply unleashes the violent side of colonialism, rather than its recuperative side. Panic and anger

do not outpace and break down binary oppositions, but apparently coalesce them, as people look to their own group for security. There is considerable evidence that such affects produce reactionary effects, not only among colonisers or in post-imperial societies, but also in postcolonial nation-states (Appadurai, 2006; Ahmed, 2003; Zhao, 1998; Liu, 2006; Xu, 2007; Skinner, 1971). This means that Bhabha implicitly counsels an ineffectual or suicidal style of politics which simply provokes negative emotions, without ever producing the affirmative affects which spur people towards progressive social change.

CHAPTER 9

Difference and Diversity

Cultural Difference

Bhabha's theory of cultural difference is one of the many variations on the theme of constitutive ambiguity in his work. He is not particularly interested in differences among cultures – in different foods, say, or differences in gender roles, or why some cultures practice headhunting while others are pacifist. He is interested mainly in the impact on culture – as a positionality – in terms of social ambiguity. From a poststructuralist point of view, cultures do not exist in themselves. They are systems of signs. They thus have no historical or material origin (Buden, 2006). They are endlessly reproduced and altered through the deferral of signification. Signs relate only to one another. There are no origins or historical processes, although signs leave traces of one another. This process creates difference through the internal ambivalence of the signifier (see above, 118-19). Although co-constituted, cultures are radically different. Different cultural positions are incommensurable – meaning impossible to measure or compare. They lack any common attribute through which they can be compared (IoP, 25). There is no common measure or standpoint from which they can be understood. For example, Bhabha argues that cultural difference is not simply a difference in how one sees art. It is also a difference in what art, or a school of art, means in different cultures (MM, 147).

The idea of constitutive ambivalence (see above, 118-19) underlies Bhabha's view of culture. For Bhabha, culture is not a source of conflict. Instead, it is an *effect* of conflict, or of discrimination. Cultural difference is produced through practices of differentiation. These practices are 'signs of authority' (LC, 114). The human capacity for culture occurs

in a 'precariously empty discursive space', a space devoid of truth (LC, 135). Hence, culture is not an epistemological object. It is not something to be observed and known, in the way an anthropologist might document a foreign culture. Instead, it is 'an enactive, enunciatory site' (LC, 178). In other words, culture is an identity category produced through acts of speech. It is about the subject of enunciation, not the subject of the statement (see above, 87-8). It is located in the zone of ambivalence which is central to Bhabha's work.

Bhabha denies that cultures have any existence in themselves. They are, rather, effects of contact between different cultural positionalities and the ambivalence this produces. Culture is not produced in a moment of original authority. Rather, it is produced through a process of translation. This process has psychoanalytic overtones of demand and desire (LC, 138). In the Lacanian sense, desire is an effect of the *che vuoi* process of co-constitution (see above, 91-4, 120-1). "Demand" is the expression of this process in specific demands (e.g. a child expressing a desire for parental recognition as a demand for food, toys, attention, etc). The point is not to show that cultures are diverse. The point is to show that cultures are always hybrid and co-constituted. They always arise in the inbetween space (LC, 38). Any treatment of cultures as coexisting *in the present* is ethnocentric, only spuriously egalitarian, and complicit in modern power (LC, 245). The crucial point for Bhabha is not concrete difference, but co-constitution. In addition, all critique *must* pass through the singular site of colonial difference. In relation to other postmodern critiques, 'we cannot accept them until we subject them to a *lagging*', a passage through the colonial moment (LC, 247). This one, mandatory point of focus is like a principal contradiction in Maoism (see Dragonowl, 2016). It forbids any slippage of difference *beyond* a particular "trunk" or master-signifier.

Culture is founded on ambivalence, and so, is inherently unstable. But its foundation can also be more or less unstable. Culture is *heimlich* (homely) – orderly, in its place – because of aspects such as homogeneous empty time, seriality, progress, customs and coherence. It is also *unheimlich* (unhomely, uncanny) in its textual or symbolic construction. These two aspects are co-constituted. In order to be 'distinctive, significatory, influential and identifiable', it also has to be 'translated, disseminated, differentiated, interdisciplinary, intertextual, international, inter-racial' (LC, 137). In other words, culture produces fixed categories, but it is produced in the inbetween space where such categories break down. For Bhabha, the breakdown of *heimlich* certainty is desirable. It opens the space for newness. At certain moments of uncertainty, nothing guarantees subjectivity or the authority of culture (LC, 137). Newness is always the re-emergence of the indeterminability of signification (LC, 203). Bhabha uses the *Satanic Verses* controversy (see above, 475-482) as an example of this phenomenon. Rushdie's work was perceived by some Muslims as blasphemous because its characters cross social and discursive borders. This led to a projection of particular fears of cultural contamination or collapse (LC, 226).

Bhabha criticises the view that the problem of cultural interaction occurs only at the boundary between cultures. Instead, he maintains that it cultural difference or interaction is also a problem of the internal limit or 'limit-text' within each culture (LC, 34). In other words, the other is already present at the heart of the construction of culture. It is an instance of a supplement or a Lacanian thing (see above, 326-30, 357-364). Perhaps because of this, Bhabha criticises approaches which simply denounce prejudice, stereotyping, or individual or institutional racism as 'moralistic' (LC, 34). Tolerance is not enough. The problem is not simply to encourage tolerance of other cultures. Bhabha's goal is to force readers to recognise the ambiguity at the heart of each culture. Cultures are never simply unitary and self-contained. They are co-constituted. The other is already inside or extimate to the self. Cultures are also never simply dualisms of self and other (LC, 35-6). Self and other interpenetrate and depend on each other for meaning. Also,

culture in itself – as something to tolerate, integrate into, suppress, etc – does not exist. Due to the slippage of signifiers, cultural differences can be renamed constantly. They do not involve 'expressive identities' which reflect something prior to them (such as human nature or historical necessity). They are always products of the inbetween space (LC, 219). They emerge from an 'interstitial future', a future which exists in the inbetween space (LC, 219). They are thus connected to the Derridean "to-come" (see above, 304-8). Difference is a matter of conflict and crisis, not celebration and consensus. It comes from proximity, not distance (RA, 63). Bhabha thus strongly rejects the Geertzian view that cultures arise from sets of meanings constituted through everyday relations in a particular social group (Geertz, 1973). He adheres strongly to a constructivist view of culture and ethnicity.

The process of textual deferral also plays a central role in Bhabha's view of culture. According to Bhabha, cultural difference travels through displacement, or the repetition

of texts outside their original context. The words of a text can cross this gap, but their implicit meanings and social context are lost (see above, 162-3). Bhabha also treats cultural difference as related to the 'archaic', an element which resists meaning and discourse (see above, 474). Cultural difference thus involves the extinction of a recognisable object of culture or identity (LC, 126). This loss of cultural identity in turn disrupts each person's individual identity, which depends on the other. Bhabha is thus not interested in the specific aspects of different cultures. Accumulating facts about other cultures is irrelevant (LC, 126). Rather, the point is to experience the disintegration of the possibility of knowledge and subjectivity, at the edge of experience. Cultural difference is Bhabha's name for the point where there is no recognisable object of culture, where representation fails. It is a difficulty which repeats itself but is never fully represented, and cannot be represented.

Difference is produced relationally. Hence, cultural difference is constructed through an 'unresolved tension' or negotiation between two things (SPD, 371). In practice, it becomes a site of (for example) racial abuse or discrimination because it becomes loaded with significations, anxieties, tensions, resource distribution conflicts and so on. Cultural difference is a sign of these tensions, and not only a symbolic difference between two things (SPD, 372). It functions as a kind of cipher for discrimination and conflict. Bhabha's concept of cultural difference is heavily influenced by Derrida's concept of *différance* (Byrne, 2009:33) or constitutive difference and deferral. For Derrida, difference is opposed to presence. Presence is always illusory. It rests on difference, or a constitutive binary. Because presence is illusory, it is always possible to expose discursive strategies behind any appearance of presence (Easthope, 1998b:343). Difference constitutes identity. It does so in the inbetween space which is contingent and indeterminable. This is the space where something is repeated, but inflected differently (LC, 234). It is also associated with 'stubborn chunks' of culture and identity which remain even when everything else melts into an assimilated public (LC, 218-19).

Negativity – struggle – has a positive value for Bhabha. He opposes celebrations of tradition or progress. Instead, he celebrates the moments when language as a closed system is disrupted by a struggle for the right to signify (FBI, 49). When the illusion of presence is effectively maintained, certain voices are blocked. In language as a closed system, some groups can speak only marginally, or not at all (FBI, 49). These groups' struggle to speak, or signify, is a struggle which ruptures the closed system. Culture can name the social imaginary as a system. But it can also name the act of grafting marginalised voices into the space of signification (FBI, 51). This grafting is performed through the moments of what 'might be' and what 'could have been', which exist in one another (FBI, 56). Bhabha terms the idea of what could have been the 'projective past' (FBI, 57). This idea of what could have been is preferred both to despair and progress. It is a moment of 'survival and negotiation' (FBI, 57). It is easy to see the overlap between Bhabha's analysis and today's insistent identity-based struggles for voice and recognition. However, those who adopt such approaches rarely realise that the theoretical basis for their pursuit of voice actually requires failure to achieve full voice.

Difference versus Diversity

Bhabha argues that one should speak of cultural *difference* rather than cultural *diversity* (LC, 32). In Bhabha's argument, difference refers to a fundamental incompatibility – something which is 'different' in this sense is radically distinct from the dominant system of meanings. In contrast, diversity refers to a range of different positions within a social field which is homogenised, or at least integrated. Alternatively, it refers to a range of separate, mutually exclusive communities (LC, 32, 34). In other words, diversity refers to differences

which can be arranged as distinctions within language, without disrupting its functioning. Bhabha sees diversity as an ethnocentric notion, which denies radical difference (LC, 177). Diversity or plurality is a discourse where 'difference returns as the same' (LC, 154). Different positions are arranged as equivalent. For Bhabha, this sequence of equivalents need to be interrupted (LC, 154).

It is not clear why believing differences can be expressed in language is ethnocentric according to Bhabha. Presumably, Bhabha believes that white or European identity depends on exclusions. So any arrangement of differences which does not bring voice to the excluded other is ethnocentric. He also differentiates his position from cultural *pluralism* and *relativism*. These are names for approaches which treat cultures as self-enclosed (LC, 173). Instead, his central point is that the formation of culture passes through ambivalence. For Bhabha, the world is not divided into distinct cultures. Rather, cultural hybridity and difference pass through every culture. Cultural difference is here analogous to sexual difference in Lacanian theory. It is a difference internal or extimate to each identity, which is formed through co-constitution. Hence, Bhabha is interested in doubling, not plurality (LC, 154).

Bhabha does not value concrete, empirical difference. Rather, he only values difference in the sense of co-constitutivity. He values the disruption of meaning, not the proliferation of ways of living. Bhabha rejects the celebration of difference as 'pure anarchic liberalism or voluntarism', in other words, as the right of each to their own difference or identity. Such a right (inherent to anarchist approaches such as the utopia *Bolo'Bolo*) are morally objectionable to Bhabha because they do not rest on a belief in an internally split subject. Instead, he sees difference as a means towards 'alienation of the self', so as to construct social solidarity,or collectivism (TS, 213). In many ways, this is an authoritarian or communitarian critique of liberalism. The other is important, not so that everyone has the freedom to be different, but so that no self is strong enough to resist being cut down to size.

Contrary to a common misreading, Bhabha is not interested in the diffusion of multiple identities and cultures. He is interested in the ruptural effects of constitutive ambiguity. According to Bhabha, today's struggles (i.e. those of the 1980s) are not simply displaced, anarchic and plural. The issue is not simply fragmentation and *bricolage*, or the right to become. Rather, there is a core antagonistic displacement. Minority discourses disrupt the conditions of emergence of the social order (LC, 230, 238, 241). They are vital because they disrupt the central point of the dominant discourse, not because they are multiple. The crucial point is the recurring 'Real', or fundamental antagonism, and not the proliferation of differences. Hence, the 'borderline' affects and identities of translation are taken to disrupt the liberal view of diversity as choice (CIB, 54). This connects closely to Bhabha's idea of combining poetic, rhetorical or aspirational with legal or political processes (see below, 936-7). For Bhabha, recognition and "hospitality" (i.e. social inclusion) are problems of 'negotiating Alterity' (i.e. self-other co-constitution). They are 'not a matter of accommodating diverse cultures or multiple identities' (ONO, 7).

Bhabha sees 'multicultural mantras' as celebrating difference without revealing its basis in the inbetween space. It is only through the inbetween space that difference brings about new social movements (MM, 433). Elsewhere, he argues that America accepts diversity as

long as it can be contained in a series of 'little nations' (SPD, 380). It's less sure about differences which 'seep in' and 'disseminate', changing the dominant culture (SPD, 380). Hence, Bhabha appears to believe that cultural difference is ineradicable. People cannot simply coexist in their difference. Rather, difference must be used to break down any kind of meaningful symbolic order. He rejects any 'unregulated open-endedness or the celebration of pluralism'. Instead, the 'anxious movement of minority enunciation' must be recognised as necessary. So must the 'possibility of choice' (MM, 459), in a sense close to the Lacanian Act (see Robinson and Tormey, 2005). The choice is between 'circling in pale dreams' – remaining trapped in fantasies – or 'entering the deep current' (MM, 459). This reflects Bhabha's underlying philosophy. Simply living in one's own subjective world, in line with one's own desires and fantasies, is not enough. There is a decisive, authoritarian moment in Lacanian theory, which rests on *forcing* recognition of the true ontological structure. Joyous diversity is to be distrusted, anxiety about a grimdark reality is to be embraced.

Bhabha argues that liberalism treats prejudice as unreflexive. It is opposed to the modern, Cartesian subject because it cannot be rebutted. However, Bhabha believes the two are linked. The modern subject is disguised and becomes invisible. It is constructed in opposition to stereotypical, racialised others who *are* visible (CIB, 55). This is why multiculturalism cannot succeed by simply valuing the positionalities of racialised minorities. These positionalities are already caught inside a discriminatory logic (CIB, 56). Minorities also cannot return to an authentic past identity. Rather, any strategy has to pass through the co-constitution of self and other (CIB, 56). This relies on Bhabha's idea of the 'time-gap' (or lag). In contrast, the liberal approach to recognition is 'right on time' (CIB, 57). It does not involve the Lacanian/Derridean view of the subject, and therefore, Bhabha dismisses it as naive. It focuses on 'equal cultural worth' and 'does not recognize the disjunctive, "borderline" temporalities of partial, minority cultures' (CIB, 56). Like many of Bhabha's conclusions, this depends on his ontological premises being correct.

For Bhabha, 'diversity' is part of the repression of cultural difference. The western, 'civilised' or 'cultured' response to difference is to treat it as an imaginary museum of items which can be collected and appreciated. This approach entails recognising the situatedness of culture, but observing it from a supposedly universal standpoint which makes them transparent (TS, 206). The standpoint is not, of course, truly universal. It is a standpoint of the dominant, mainstream, western culture. The construction of 'diversity' thus reinforces western power. Diversity both encourages and contains cultural difference. It uses a norm of transparency (a universal point of view) to subordinate difference. This is why multiculturalism can coexist with ethnocentrism and racism in countries like Britain (TS, 208). It should be added here that Bhabha theorises a particular, fetishistic structure in colonialism and racism. They simultaneously affirm and deny difference – a process known as disavowal (see above, 454). From this point of view, liberal diversity is simply one of the poles of this disavowal. This is why it can coexist with racism.

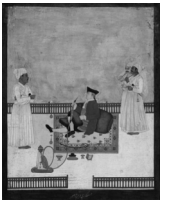
For Bhabha, difference is more radical than liberal diversity. It cannot be contained in any kind of universal framework. And it cannot be perceived from any single point of view (TS, 209). Cultures are incommensurable, or irreducibly different. The relationship among them can only be one of 'translation', or contingent exchange (TS, 209). The basis for such exchange is the fact that all languages are 'symbol-forming and subject-constituting, interpellative practices' (TS, 210). In other words, all languages and cultures are effects of the basic structure of textuality and co-constitution (see above, 119-20). All languages have a self-alienating limit because of this nature. They lack cultural authority internally, even before their contact with any other culture. This lack of authority provides the basis for translation (TS, 210). In other words, other cultures can find an entry into a particular culture through its inner split, its category of the other. Translation both imitates the original and displaces it (TS, 210), in a manner reminiscent of Derridean deferral. In other words, a Lacanian, Derridean or Althusserian view of language is the basis for exchanges among languages, which pass through the borderzone posited by such theories.

Other anti-racist theorists, such as Paul Gilroy (2004), attach a great deal of importance to everyday conviviality. Social practices such as getting drunk together or talking to neighbours are taken to partially overcome racism. Other theories focus on cultural exchange as a way to overcome racism. For example, it's significant that non-western foods and clothing styles have become popular in the west. Bhabha's main criticism of diversity is that conviviality and/or cultural exchange 'doesn't really work' to solve the problem of cultural difference (VT, 74). White people can eat curries, listen to rap music, hang out with black people in pubs, and still feel threatened by racial difference – for example, by new immigration or by non-white criminals. Most racists have "one black friend". Skinhead hairstyles are copied from black culture. Racists often support football clubs with transnational, racially diverse teams. For Bhabha, this means that there is something darker and more intractable about the constitutive force of cultural difference. He also opposes the 'mantra' of the global in the local (BWRAO, 16). Global forces actually reproduce 'compensatory projections' of the local, based on what they think it should have been (MM, 458). In other words, the local is co-constituted as the other of the global. It has meaning only in relation to it.

For Bhabha, therefore, the main issue is not the right to practice one's own culture. The main issue is to open up a space of ambivalence, so as to disrupt dominant (white, modern) identities. This is achieved by changing 'the position of enunciation', the standpoint from which speech occurs, rather than the content of discourse (LC, 162). In particular, speech from the "minority" (inbetween) standpoint dislocates dominant discourses. Cultures are co-constituted. There is thus a constant struggle between the illusion of cultural identity or presence, and the reality of ambiguity and inbetweenness on which all culture depends. Approaches which seek to discuss cultures empirically are necessarily part of the former illusion of identity. Hence, the space of western cultural theory has to assume its own 'universality of lucid representation' (Rose, 1995:369). In other words, it has to assume that academics can stand outside and classify cultures. For this reason, it cannot acknowledge 'cultural difference' in Bhabha's sense. It can't see the split nature of culture itself, which defines each of the various cultures. It can only recognise diversity. Opponents would, of course, question whether this constitutive ambivalence really exists, and therefore, whether they are "failing to see" it. Bhabha engages in a therapeutic language which posits the truth of his position in advance. But if Bhabha is right about co-constitution of cultural identities, his critique of diversity logically follows from it.

This view pits Bhabha against approaches which seek cross-cultural understanding through interpretation. In an analysis of the anthropologist Clifford Geertz, Bhabha praises the idea of irremovable strangeness, but criticises what he takes to be Geertz's 'Archimedian position' (ISBD, 36). In other words, he dislikes the fact that Geertz writes as an observer, as if from outside the topics he writes about. For Bhabha, this standpoint means that Geertz's recognition of strangeness 'becomes everyday liberal proceduralism' (ISBD, 36). Bhabha is here referring to the idea of an Archimedean point, a point of view from which everything can be seen. Geertz writes a lot about cultural differences, but he writes in a fairly ordinary academic way. He makes statements of fact about how he thinks

other cultures operate as systems of meaning. Geertz discusses "strangeness" in terms of how the practices of one culture seem strange from the standpoint of another. Bhabha's objection to Geertz is that Geertz continues to operate with a conventional type of knowledge-claim, even while recognising strangeness. For Bhabha, recognition of strangeness is complete only when it involves rejection of a standpoint of knowledge which can perceive and "know" strangeness. Full recognition requires a weak ego and a communicative style like Bhabha's, which revels in ambiguity rather than knowledge. In other words, for Bhabha, we can't really talk about difference without being Derridean. In a sense, this is a circular argument, since the failure of cultural interpretation is explained by reference to constitutive cultural difference, but such difference is only recognised if one already rejects the project of interpretation.



Bhabha is thus extremely restrictive in terms of how difference can be discussed. Recognising cultural difference requires the use of 'differential, disjunctive temporalities' which pass through the inbetween space (TT, 114). Such temporalities preclude certain kinds of 'homogenizing spatial metaphors' (TT, 114). Bhabha does not specify the full range of theories which are thus ruled out, but they are specified to include the historical ideas of Marx and Foucault, among others. I suspect they would include any theory which refuses constitutive lack and ambiguity in Bhabha's sense – in other words, which treats things or relations as distinct and clearly expressible in some way or other, rather than as constitutively split and alienated. An adequate response to cultural difference necessarily takes an ambiguous form, similar to Bhabha's own writings. This shows how Bhabha's project is reterritorialising as well as deterritorialising. The call for openness to other writing styles and worldviews, against the hegemony of dominant western approaches, ultimately turns into a stark insistence on one – and only one – way of writing and theorising.

Bhabha is correspondingly hostile to empiricism, rationalism, and ethnography. The reason is supposedly that they deny the constitutive role of disruptive processes such as metonymy (LC, 127). They represent others directly, as an object or subject, and posit 'commensurability', or the possibility of understanding other cultures / understanding across cultures (LC, 127). This belief in the possibility of successful communication is taken to lead to a 'transparency' of cultures which impedes the anti-colonial gestures of hybridity, mimicry and so on (LC, 127). It also denies the 'impossibility of signifying' which is central to the colonial experience (LC, 127). The critique here is rather swingeing. Anything which rejects the basic Derridean hypothesis of constitutive ambiguity is rejected, for this reason alone, without any chance to defend itself.

When Bhabha talks about cultural difference, he isn't primarily talking about differences between cultures. He's talking about the ways in which real people don't stay in the categories that other people put them in. When the resultant gap between position and representation occurs in a context of racial or cultural domination, Bhabha terms it 'cultural difference'. Given that Bhabha maintains that identities are constitutively split, he also suggests that cultural difference is constitutive of culture. There are no cultures prior to their antagonism or hybridisation. Cultures are produced in relation to one another. This makes it hard for Bhabha to talk about pre-colonial or non-colonial cultures. On the other hand, migrant, diasporic, hybrid and displaced cultures become easier to talk about.

Elsewhere, Bhabha draws a similar distinction between liberal/ironist *redescription* (or multiplication of stories) and his own idea of *reinscription*. His version of the poststructuralist idea of reinscription entails the return of radical difference (LC, 192).

The liberal version, which downplays antagonism and emphasises kindness, is taken to disempower subaltern people. Instead, the present should be seen as 'disjunctive'. Its conflicts cannot be reconciled. Subaltern speech necessarily rearticulates things outside their usual framings (LC, 193). It contests symbols of authority. This process of contestation shifts the ground of antagonism (LC, 193). For Bhabha, cultural difference is disruptive (of meaning and egos) whereas diversity is not. The non-western other has been confined to a site of institutional containment, as a docile object. Diversity and ethnography are instances of this containment. But cultural difference, or the other, returns to subvert the logic of its subordination. It is necessary to recognise difference rather than diversity in order to discuss this disruption (LC, 32). For Bhabha, the choice of terminology is a crucial political intervention in the social construction of reality, which can have revolutionary effects. Cultural diversity is an 'epistemological object'. It consists of observable features of cultures which can be known and classified. In contrast, cultural difference is a 'process of enunciation'. It is a way of engaging with culture which undermines the imposition of a unitary cultural system (LC, 34). The crucial point is not the multiplicity of cultures. The crucial point is that every culture is hybrid and ambiguous, because it is spoken from the Third Space of enunciation (LC, 38).

According to Bhabha, cultural difference is the reason racialised minorities are potentially disruptive of power. The 'subject of cultural difference' (migrants, minorities and so on) is caught between metropolitan assimilation and cultural revivalism. It is an element in the process of translation which cannot itself be translated (LC, 224). It is because this subject resists translation that it is subversive, and can create newness. Its identity is indeterminate and unresolvable (LC, 225). It is experienced by purists as blasphemous or out-of-place. It also seems to undermine community cohesion (LC, 225). These are signs of its disruptive power. This power often involves a misreading of colonial meanings. Texts are read through background assumptions about the meanings of the words or images they contain. These background assumptions, or mental stacks of meanings, are built up from previous cultural experience. Because people from different cultures or positionalities have different background assumptions, and these background assumptions affect how they understand texts, people from different cultures read the same text in different ways. For example, misunderstanding Christianity in Hindu religious terms as attaining brahmin status is an example of cultural difference (LC, 33). For Bhabha, this is progressive, because it disrupts colonial power and fixed meanings. In the case of Christianity, the misreading led to a loss of faith that the Christian text had a self-present, obvious meaning (LC, 34). In Bhabha's work, therefore, misreading is effectively *encouraged* as a way of decentring western power. In a political context, this gives a subaltern agent the capacity to wilfully misunderstand others' claims, and present their misreadings as the "privileged" person's hidden truth.

Recognising cultural difference means changing not merely the content of discourse, but the 'social temporality' (LC, 171). In other words, it involves writing history through juxtaposition and ambivalence – like Bhabha does. The temporality of counter-hegemonic strategies (i.e. of resistance) is contingency (LC, 171). In one passage, Bhabha argues that the newness of migrant and minority discourse can only be discovered *in medias res* – in the middle of things (LC, 227). In other words, Bhabha rejects the use of general structural categories to interpret events. Each event can only be interpreted in its immediate contingency. This contrasts with the repetitiveness of Bhabha's structural readings. In another passage, he argues that the global terrain is temporally discontinuous. It is experienced as 'incubational' – preparing for a future – and not as past or present. Despite its discontinuity, it can be experienced in a 'shared historical time of "translation"' (DDR, 31).

Critique: Political Consequences of Bhabha's Pessimism

At its best, Bhabha's approach is a critique of entrenched power. It encourages translation instead of transcendence. In other words, it encourages forms of community and dialogue

which are horizontal rather than vertical, and which do not rely on an overarching common identity (LC, 153). However, the conditions for such dialogue are rendered precarious. Cultures are incommensurable. Each is internally ambiguous and already includes the other culture as "extimate". And acceptance of incommensurability and the rest of Derridean theory is a prerequisite for dialogue. As a result any dialogue is at once extremely closed (occurring within a circle of Derridean or Lacanian positions) and utterly futile (since the positions remain incommensurable).

The conclusions which result from Bhabha's analysis are pessimistic. According to Han, diversity depends on the possibility of cultural harmony. But cultural harmony depends on the existence of separate, delineated cultures. Such a separation can be achieved only through 'the master's preemptive historiography' - in other words, by an overarching power which fixes the boundaries of groups. But such mastery is also undesirable and impossible. This means that cultural harmony is impossible (Han, 2005:5). Conflict is unavoidable. Critical commentator Paresh Chandra argues that Bhabha is inconsistent. He sees cultures as untranslatable, but also as co-constituted and mutually continuous (Chandra, 2012:200). Chandra argues that hybridity involves making one's own language more like the other person's (2012:202). It is not a process involving radical difference. For example, he contests Bhabha's reading of Walter Benjamin's work on translation. For Benjamin, translation involves importing another's linguistic form and framing into one's own language. Benjamin's approach focuses on political practice. Bhabha's, in contrast, focuses on survival and aesthetic celebration (2012:206).

Cultural difference is meant to undermine knowledge of other cultures. Indeed, knowledge of other cultures is seen as a form of mastery and colonialism. Bhabha thus swings a scythe against everything falling under the broad heading of science or knowledge. The driving force of this critique is that, by denying ambivalence, such approaches reinforce the silencing of colonised or oppressed peoples. And he has a point. Any way of seeing can see some things, and not others. This means that some things are difficult to communicate within a particular framework. It is also true that certain theories of the kind Bhabha explicitly cites here (e.g. Ernest Gellner's critique of relativism) assume an orderly, communicable world to such a degree as to make most of existence incommunicable. In these theories, what can't be communicated in the dominant frame can't be recognised as existing either. But is this necessarily the case for all discourses which claim to be 'knowledge' or 'science'?

It is not clear that any such silencing results from interpretive ethnography as practiced by the likes of Geertz. Rather, the understanding which comes with obtaining a glimpse inside another linguistic world helps to combat the silence which otherwise arises from incomprehension. Broadening one's language or cultural horizons can be an effective way to enable dialogue. It can also throw light on the contingency and local nature of one's own assumptions. On the other hand, assuming cultures are incommensurable can have silencing effects. If one assumes something can't be understood, one may hold back from trying to understand it. And if one assumes it can't be understood because it is an effect of an already-known ambivalence inherent to language, one indirectly reduces it back to known categories. In Bhabha's approach, any attempt to gain an understanding of others' points of view is all but ruled out as disavowal. The fear here, as in many Lacanian approaches, may well be a fear of the loss of the very 'lack' which sustains the theory. This 'lack' is necessary for the ecstatic enjoyment of a closed theoretical circle (see above, 312, 362-3), but harmful to wider social projects of liberation and coexistence.

Bhabha's objection is far deeper than simply a criticism of the ethnocentric failings of European anthropology or social science. He isn't just trying to rectify particular errors arising from a western point of view. His critique entails a fundamental objection to the very idea of attempting to 'know' others empirically, dialogically, or rationally. One is to relate to others *only* through self-other co-constitutivity and Levinasian ethics – by occupying their extimate other-position, or recognising them in one's own. From Bhabha's point of view (and for many postcolonial theorists and other identity-based poststructuralists), there is something inherently violent, arrogant, narcissistic, disavowing, and generally offensive about trying to 'know'. The 'knowing subject', rather than capitalism or imperialism, is identified as the main enemy. Such an approach is based on Foucault's view that power and knowledge imply one another. Yet this seems to misrepresent knowing exclusively as a process of 'knowledge-over' which sustains 'power-over' others. It ignores the ways in which knowledge may also be a necessary part of 'nomad science', of everyday practices of self-empowerment, care for self and others, the construction of immanent social relations. Indigenous and local knowledges are still nonetheless *knowledges*, and vitally necessary for people's survival and flourishing.

As we have seen, Bhabha devalues real diversity. He is opposed to an 'anarchic pluralism' where differences are tolerated. This is rather problematic. The perspective of 'difference' in Bhabha's sense – constitutive difference *inside* dominant identities – can undermine recognition of real, outer difference. Treating the other as an "extimate" part of the self is not always a helpful way to deal with differences which may be *concretely* incommensurable

– meaning that the other is actually radically different in a way external to one's own worldview, not simply identical with its disavowed part. It ultimately confuses one's internal, introjected "other" with real, concrete others. Bhabha's prohibition on empirically examining other cultures also prevents these cultures from disrupting the assumption that all human beings are caught within a Derridean textual process. It requires that the Other (i.e. someone from another culture, or the hybrid elements of one's own culture) be approached in a spirit of awe, humility, self-abnegation and celebration of discomfort. But this is not necessarily an effective way to relate to real, concrete "others" with particular problems and needs – for example, refugees fleeing oppression, or starving people, or people with disabilities who have particular support needs. It may cast others in an idealised and deified role which ignores their concrete situation, just as surely as any other cross-cultural interpretation may create fixed roles.

It may, in fact, be easier to relate to others in terms *they* will understand if a Geertzian interpretive process is attempted. Even if ultimate comprehension is frustrated, one at least comes closer, approximately, to understanding what another person wants or needs, or what they're trying to say. Bhabha's approach, in contrast, projects a western Derridean or Lacanian psychology, or a Levinasian assumption of absolute difference, onto concrete others from within his own closed worldview. This ultimately serves – contrary to his purpose – to insulate sameness from difference and to prevent his own underlying assumptions, his own fixed meanings, from ever being open to disjuncture or difference. I don't share Bhabha's objection, for example, to the work of Geertz. Geertz certainly retains pretensions to 'scientific' status and other problematic modern constructs, but also provides a kind of analysis (known as 'thick description') which aids greatly in cultural translation. If someone was travelling to India, and wanted to avoid causing distress to Indian people, they would learn more from a Geertzian anthropologist than they would from Bhabha.

For Bhabha, cultural difference and incommensurability (i.e. constitutive ambivalence) erode the basis for 'rationalism'. There can be no talk, for example, of historical progress when there is no unified cultural direction (LC, 195). Ideas of essence, past foundation, and authentic identity are similarly undermined. Because there is no unitary kind of human being, or universal ethical good, or standpoint which encompasses both coloniser and colonised, conflicts are irreducible and insoluble. This supposedly destroys any type of political language which relies on a past, present or future harmony to ground a choice of a particular path. Constitutive ambiguity also seems to destroy any possibility of hope or resolution, but this does not seem to worry Bhabha. A denial of solubility hurts both the system and its enemies. But it seems to do more harm to positions relying on radical transformation than it does to the system. By replacing reform and revolution with simple juxtaposition and acceptance of insoluble conflict, Bhabha sublimates the current situation (see above, 392-3), and removes the path to transformation. We end up stuck permanently with conflicts we cannot resolve. And in fact, we know that, historically, some differences *have* been resolved, and some identities *have* disappeared.

Bhabha's theory does not merely require that people have different points of view with no *current* resolution. He requires that there be something fundamental about such differences

which means that no resolution is possible. His ontological ground for this belief is the Lacanian assumption about the constitutively split nature of identity itself. Bhabha takes real examples of differences in perspective as instances of this constitutive split. But how do we know they are not simply contingent differences, which could be resolved through a process of translation or dialogue? It seems impossible to know that differences have this constitutive rather than contingent character.

Bhabha relies on a particular kind of contact through ambivalence and "translation", in his special sense. I think in reality, this sublimated time of incubation and translation is absent from most people's experiences. Rather, people experience the current situation as a temporal folding-in, an eternal and inescapable present marked by anxiety and precarity (see IPC, 2014; Berardi, 2009; Rushkoff, 2004). Bhabha nurtures an affective state of discontinuous hope for a messiah who will never come, in line with Derridean theory (see above, 304-8). This hope, by its very nature, cannot be fulfilled – because if it is, it returns to the hated domain of meaning and knowledge. And it is disempowering, in terms of agency. Bhabha effectively sacrifices political agency – which requires agency, 'ego', knowledge – for the empty enjoyment of a sublimated experience of suffering.

Overall, there is something reductive and authoritarian in Bhabha's project. He believes he is redirecting his readers to the *real* site of difference and antagonism, not simply contributing to a free flow of different narratives. The free flow is sometimes valued, only because it leads back to this "trunk" of meaning which Bhabha takes for granted. This 'real' site is pessimistic and conservative. It consists in the impossibility of social coexistence, and the necessity of endless disjunction and discomfort – an endless, grimdark wasteland of insoluble conflict and personal dissatisfaction.

Some things are different, in the sense of being incommensurable (irreducible to a single system of meanings). The loss of a standard of comparison can be liberating, when it breaks down reductive categories. For example, it destroys the basis for seeing cultures as superior and inferior, or for judging people legally, or for giving out exam marks. However, Bhabha's position only recognises incommensurability among cultures. This implies that people within a culture are comparable. It also seems to leave white and/or western subjects stuck within an oppressor identity. Incommensurable individual eccentricities and psychological differences are not recognised – because Bhabha's psychological model is socially reductive. Hence, the idea of incommensurability may not go far enough. Bhabha tends to binarise difference in terms of western versus non-western. But on some levels, any two individuals are radically different.

Bhabha's approach may also be counterproductive. Its denial of "diversity", conviviality, and strategies of coexistence, and its exacerbation of insoluble antagonisms, provides fuel for racism. If others are incommensurable, they come to seem threatening – not only to westerners, but also (for example) to Hindu communalists, salafi Muslims, indigenous revivalists, and nationalists across the world. Something which cannot be known is inherently frightening, because it is impossible to know whether it poses a threat or not. From this, it is a short step to treating difference as a threat – particularly when everyone's life-conditions are precarious. What cannot be understood cannot be judged fairly, so ambiguity defeats a liberal project of civic control. However, what cannot be understood

can still be treated as a 'risk' or an existential threat, a response which renders this defeat of liberalism politically counterproductive. Liberalism is replaced, not by a weaker authority or a society without authority, but by a stronger, more arbitrary authority which recognises its own groundlessness and engages in despotism and tyranny. Rather than seeking bridges which mitigate such fears, Bhabha revels in incommensurability, calling on people to embrace a total lack of meaning. Bhabha's theory tends to evade the problem of mutual risk-perception, because the mystical sublimation of powerlessness and ignorance eliminates concern over one's own or others' suffering. But it is doubtful whether such an ethos is sustainable on a mass scale.

There is a certain obviousness to the claim that, while visible differences or 'diversity' does not disrupt meaning, a difference so deep that it cannot be represented is disruptive of meaning and identity. However, the progressive nature of such deep differences is premised on Bhabha's belief that power is primarily an effect of the western ego. Incommensurable difference with no possibility of harmony (whether through integration or separation) disrupts ego, knowledge, and power in general. It does not only disrupt the power of colonisers. It also disrupts the affirmative power of people seeking to coexist, or to resist. Furthermore, Bhabha's approach requires at the level of his statements that there be no valid universal point of view. Yet Bhabha *does* articulate a universal point of view here: the point of view of Lacanian, Derridean or Althusserian language-theory (see

above, 251-8). Bhabha claims that his theory differs from (say) a Marxist, Habermasian, Geertzian, liberal, poststructuralist or Freudian analysis of culture because he recognises difference more radically. In practice, however, he simply deploys a different universal theory. Indeed, his opposition to 'diversity' seems to subordinate the interests of racialised and colonised groups to a general philosophical project. Bhabha treats racial politics as simply a local front in the war against the real enemy: the "knowing subject" or the "ego". Whether this is a valid approach or not, it is certainly no more focused on race in its root politics than (say) a Marxist view that race is an effect of ruling-class divide-and-rule strategies, or a Christian view that racism can be overcome through universal communion. Like these approaches, it gambles on racial inequality being an effect of something deeper, meaning it will disappear when this deeper root cause is taken away.

In addition, Bhabha's theory of cultural difference is entangled in contradictions. He would doubtless see these as "aporias" in reality, but they undermine the logic of his approach. On the one hand, Bhabha claims that cultures are incommensurable. This is central to his critique of liberal 'diversity'. On the other hand, Bhabha rejects the view that cultures are self-contained entities. They are constitutively split, and related to their 'others'. This seems to be a self-contradiction, because cultures either are or are not hermetically sealed units. Bhabha seems to take his position on the construction of culture through the inbetween space and the process of deferral to answer this problem. The process of identity-formation produces identities which are related, yet incommensurable, because the two aspects of the zone of inbetweenness are themselves incommensurable. This answer seems inadequate, however. If culture is internally split, and always between the same aspects, this creates a ground for commensurability.

If cultures are incommensurable, it also seems illogical to assume that they can hybridise. The circle is squared by assuming that self and other are somehow part of a single totality or field, even while being incommensurable (so the other is radically other, but also structurally necessary for the self). Yet this does not entirely solve the problem. If cultures

are social constructs (and people are blank slates), then cultures can be reconstructed. They are never radically incommensurable, because they might be reconstructed as commensurable. In order to be incommensurable, there has to be something in the other that cannot be constructed in the self, and vice-versa. Yet strong social constructivism denies that any such thing could exist. If for instance the fact of being a white American or a Native American is a social construct, and there is nothing outside of social construction which makes someone one or the other, then there is no inherent reason a white American couldn't be resocialised as a Native American or vice-versa; the two are not, therefore, incommensurable. If on the other hand, there is an incommensurable difference, then there must be distinct groups and therefore 'diversity' rather than 'difference'. It might be possible to resolve the problem by asserting that constructs are fixed in place, once they are constructed. Yet Bhabha's theory of hybridity and cultural change also precludes this resolution. Identities are constantly in movement. The logical problem seems insoluble.

As we have seen (above, 251-8), Bhabha in fact uses Lacanian and Derridean theory as a kind of universal master narrative. Bhabha's claim to incommensurability thus comes to rest on the plausibility of the Lacanian hypothesis that the inbetween zone itself is paradoxical and incomprehensible. Yet this view is non-falsifiable, and correspondingly, is an article of faith. It is possible to prove that existing universalisms are insufficient to render cultures commensurable, though Bhabha rarely attempts to do this. On the other

hand, it seems impossible in advance to prove that cultures are *inherently* incommensurable, i.e. that no single perspective could ever comprehend both points of view in any particular situation. Such a claim deals with counterfactuals – claims about things which might exist, but don't exist. Claims about counterfactuals are notoriously difficult to test. There is thus no way to know whether two things are inherently incommensurable, or just haven't been successfully reconciled yet.

As we have seen, Bhabha criticises multiculturalism, diversity, "the local", and everyday conviviality. He opposes these approaches because they rely on rendering differences mutually harmless. Each individual or group is rendered able to live in their own self-contained identity or culture. The moment where co-constitution disrupts identity is therefore avoided. There's a few issues with this criticism. One issue is that everyday conviviality *does* seem to reduce racial prejudice in practice (e.g. Alba et al., 2005). Another is that Bhabha is once more conflating actual social entities with their linguistic categories. For instance, the fact that two groups are currently constituted as antagonistic, or that the local is defined in relation to the global, does not mean that the actually-existing groups are effects of these binaries (see above, 240-1). Bhabha effectively turns the dependence of *concepts* on their others into a necessity for conflict among the things the concepts refer to.

The conflation of contingent, situated conflicts with a (supposed) constitutive antagonism at the level of subject-formation has unhelpful effects in dealing with actual cultural conflicts. Suppose for instance that there's a concrete situation of ethnic conflict. Two groups want the same resources, which they can't both have. Meitei, Naga, and Kuki fight over the distribution of power in Manipur. Papuan pastoralists and foragers dispute with Indonesian settlers over land use. Palestinians and Israeli Jews fight over the right to worship at al-Aqsa/the Temple on the Mount. Russians and Ukrainians disagree about the status of Crimea. Oil companies encourage fighting between Ijaw and Itsekiri in the Niger Delta. What good does it do to propose that these conflicts are simply insoluble, that cultural differences are irreconcilable? And why, if this is the case, do certain conflicts seem to be resolved, or latent for long periods? What is the role of the political and economic factors which often seem crucial in setting off conflicts? For example, there have been periods of devastating genocidal massacres between Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda and Burundi. But there have also been long periods of mutual coexistence, and even periods when ethnicity seems barely salient to everyday life. This doesn't make sense if the Hutu/Tutsi conflict is a result of an irreconcilable, incommensurable difference at the level of identity-formation.

There are various ways such discrepancies can be discussed. Some authors (such as Fanon) might define each conflictual situation as one of oppression or structural violence, and side with the group they deem oppressed. The assumption of this position is that the victory of the oppressed force will produce a better situation. Other authors would emphasise conflict transformation (Lederach, 2005) or different ways of communicating (Rosenberg, 2005) so as to find a constructive solution. Yet more authors, such as Richard Sennett (2018), Zygmunt Bauman (2000) and Paul Gilroy (2004), emphasise everyday conviviality as a counterbalance to conflict. And others, such as Charles Fourier and Colin Ward, look for ways to satisfy everyone's needs. Still other theorists argue that ethnic conflicts result from politicisation of ethnicity or from conflicts over distribution of

resources in clientelist systems. For example, in Africa, politics is often 'ethnic' because states capture large shares of money in economies geared towards exporting primary commodities. Ethnicity is often the language in which different groups articulate claims on the resultant state resources. So, changing the political economy of a country would take away the root causes of ethnic conflict.

All of these approaches seem to be ruled out by Bhabha as rationalist, humanist, liberal, or essentialist. All five approaches would be denounced as seeing the conflict as soluble, and denying its basic constitutive character. Instead, Bhabha would urge us to simply juxtapose the two positions in all their radical difference, accepting and sublimating the insolubility of the conflict. This seems an impractical and unconstructive response to concrete conflicts. It makes it more likely that the antagonists would come to blows, at which point Bhabha would leave us powerless to do anything besides denouncing their essentialism and continuing to proselytise against the sins of human egos.

The emphasis on multiple voices and standpoints can also have conservative effects. It renders dominant social logics, such as neoliberalism and state power, invisible. The poststructuralist position that (say) the state or the market is different in each instance, because it is narrated in different ways and has different impacts, can detract from the struggle against the social logic itself. I believe it is possible to say that capitalism is always

exploitative, colonialism is always dominatory, the state is always authoritarian, without eliding the differences among specific instances of these phenomena. Such statements are often ruled out in principle, under the guise of anti-essentialism. For example, poststructuralism's narrative of multiplicity has largely erased the theory of cultural imperialism in academia (see Thussu, 2009; Inda and Rosaldo, 2008). Cultural imperialism is seen as a naïve concept, because cultural exchanges do not just go one-way, and Northern texts are not uncritically assimilated by the global South. But the poststructuralist perspective usually fails to recognise the vast power-asymmetries involved in global cultural exchanges. The North uses its cultural power to extract rents through intellectual property, while also capturing and influencing audiences worldwide. And it only permits transgressions of dominant norms in media texts up to a certain point. The agency exercised by viewers and readers does not negate this underlying power-relationship.

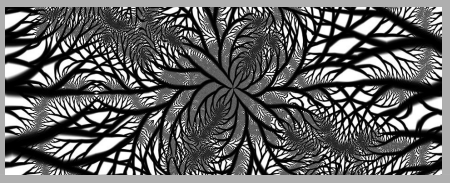
Ultimately, postcolonial theory is too restrictive, too rigid, and too hostile to meaning to be of much use in the creation of active counter-powers of cultural connection, recognition, survival, or liberation. It is designed to break down meaning and power rather than to build them. For this reason, it is counterproductive for even the most horizontal, localised, or situated kind of nomad science or active power-to. I'll admit to preferring a detailed attempt to describe (say) an indigenous cosmology – even one which is patently imperfect, where I have to edit out the more obvious Eurocentric assumptions for example – over endless strategic gestures pointing to a difference which cannot be

represented, but which is asserted in the abstract to somehow subvert western power. The empirically-articulated claim that a certain culture does not use exclusive binaries, or has no concept of 'father', or uses narratives in shifting and contextual variations with no authoritative version, or that certain cultures do not see any need for the state, the market, formal education, nuclear families, and other core western institutions – even the claim that some cultures see modernity or the state as evil magic or a disease – are claims which shake and disrupt the foundations of western thought. They also, quite inconveniently for some, disrupt the foundations of western-inspired poststructuralist and postcolonial theories. On the other hand, a difference deemed too incommensurable to even attempt to articulate has little disruptive effect. The 'western subject' is confronted with the unknown, and with an empty demand for impossible change, but western knowledge remains the dominant field of knowledge. It is suspended and not overcome. And any attempt to build another world is frustrated by the denial of concrete knowledge and the frustration of the means to build *any* kind of world.

As in other aspects of his theory, Bhabha seems more interested in striking blows against meaning and the ego in an ongoing psychodrama than in achieving positive political changes in the outer world. The blows struck against 'western' reason and meaning also destroy *all* reason and meaning as collateral damage, disempowering radical and grassroots actors. Part of Bhabha's project seems to be to destroy "the subject" or "the ego" at any cost. This is a way to produce certain kinds of spiritual or therapeutic experiences of the inadequacy of the ego and the sublimity of difference – experiences which are attractive enough to draw in many academics. However, these experiences – occurring entirely within the psyches of a handful of highly-educated readers – do not transform the real structures of oppression, or encourage forms of subjectivity appropriate for political action.

It is instructive to contrast Bhabha's view with Deleuze and Guattari's. For Deleuze and Guattari, minorities become radical when they become independent of the dominant system. A 'minoritarian' flow, which defines itself by its own values, can escape capture by the system. When minorities are defined relative to the majority, they are recaptured and brought into the system (1987:105-6, 291-2, 472-3). Bhabha has in common with Deleuze and Guattari the idea that minorities escape from dominant categories. They inhabit a different space – the 'third space'. However, Bhabha treats minorities as always relative to the dominant pole or 'trunk'. They are created through co-constitutivity. The radical gesture is to accept this, and use its disjunctive force to disrupt the dominant ego. For Deleuze and Guattari, in contrast, a minority is radical when it becomes autonomous, when it separates from the 'trunk'. It is precisely when it *stops* focusing on its relationship to the majority, and starts to create its own assemblages, that a minoritarian movement becomes radically transformative. By becoming autonomous, a movement escapes from the endless struggle for recognition which keeps it trapped in a subordinate relationship to the 'trunk'. For Bhabha, this moment of autonomy is impossible and undesirable – even dangerous. It reproduces radical antagonism. As a result, Bhabha can only countenance minorities of the kind which Deleuze and Guattari see as recaptured or recuperated. Bhabha's minorities can begin a line of flight, but never escape the primacy of the existing 'trunk'. Their line of flight is blocked by the insistence on the relationship to the 'trunk' as the primary relationship – and hence a focus on hybridity, mimicry, extimate difference, etc. From a Deleuzian perspective, Bhabha thus keeps the power of the existing 'trunk' intact. He helps to recapture escaping minorities by channelling their lines of flight into conversations with the 'trunk'.

In the Margins: Deleuze and Guattari on Minoritarianism



The idea of minoritarian and majoritarian forces is formulated by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*. For Deleuze and Guattari, we are all basically bundles of flows and energies, held together loosely in particular combinations of desires and connections, known as 'assemblages' or 'territories'. Oppressive systems arise from the imposition of regimes of coding, counting, and control on the domain of flows and energies. Identity is a problem because it reduces the many flows which compose a person to a single entity. "Majority" is connected to identity and the system, whereas "minorities" are points at which the flows of life escape from capture by the system. Deleuze and Guattari supported the many radical minoritarian movements of their time – Palestinian liberation, abortion rights, gay liberation, Basque separatism, anti-psychiatry. However, they were less interested in the inclusion of particular groups than in flows of desire which escape from control. Ultimately, they wish to see these forces entirely replace the dominant regime with a schizorevolutionary network which no longer has a central point of hierarchical integration – a 'trunk'. Instead of the arborescent (tree-like) structure focused on a trunk, they want to create a network of particular clusters of desires, known as a 'rhizome'.

The categories of majority and minority in this sense do not relate to numbers. Rather, a 'majority' is the standard or state-led identity. It implies a state of domination and is similar to what is called the 'unmarked term' in other theories. The majority provides a kind of standard or benchmark to which everyone else is compared. Even if (say) white people or the middle-class make up only 10% of the population,

they can still be a majority in this sense. In fact, Deleuze and Guattari say that, in a sense, everyone is minority, no-one is majority. The majority is an abstract standard, so it isn't the same as any actual person. Minorities are related to processes of becoming, and Deleuze and Guattari repeatedly refer to 'minoritarian becomings' such as becoming-Indian, becoming-animal, becoming-woman, and becoming-child. These becomings are processes of the same type, whether the person is assigned to majority or minority identities on an aggregate level. A woman has to 'become woman' so as not to be reduced to an axiom attached to the male trunk; a man can also 'become woman' to escape majority status. Similarly, everyone has to become non-white – whether they're classified as white or not. This isn't a question of identity or imitation. It's a question of occupying a particular zone in the field of desire.

Minorities are defined by their relationship to flows of becoming. They are nondenumerable. They can't be counted, and they aren't part of the regime of counting. The regime of power – the 'axiomatic' - can only deal with denumerable (countable) groups. Nondenumerable groups tend to escape its control. However, minorities tend to be captured, or 'reterritorialised', by majorities. This happens when they're turned into fixed identities related to the majority. When a minority is defined as a state of being, it loses some of its minoritarian force, its relationship to becoming. This is similar in some ways to Bhabha's critique of 'diversity'.

However, the Deleuzian alternative is very different from Bhabha's. For Deleuze and Guattari, the point is not to win the majority, to seize power and become the majority, or to relate the minority to the majority so as to 'decentre' the majority. Rather, the point is to advance at the molecular level – to increase the power and autonomy of minorities which escape from majority control. Ultimately, this will rupture and destroy majorities (standards) – but not in the Derridean sense of undermining co-constituted identities. Instead, it will undermine the capture of non-linguistic forces by linguistic categories. It will lead to the escape of unrepresented flows from the field of representation.

Minorities do not succeed when the 'axiomatic' adds another 'axiom' to include them. They succeed when the power of nondenumerable forces – of the forces which have not been reduced to the dominant regime – becomes stronger than the power of the denumerable forces. It is through leaving, fleeing, or getting outside the capitalist axiomatic that forces become revolutionary. What really frightens the system is not the specific 'being' or demands of minorities. It's the fact that people are formulating or producing their own desires and projects – and that these do not flow from or into the system. The system can only respond by either trying to exterminate minorities or include and incorporate them. But neither of these responses is sufficient to destroy the force of becoming, which is expressed by minorities. Postcolonial theory has an ambiguous relationship to Deleuzian thought. It borrows Deleuzian language, but at the same time, periodically attacks Deleuze and Guattari for their rejection of structuralist determinism and constitutive lack (see Spivak, 1988; Robinson and Tormey, 2010; and c.f. below, 853-9). From Deleuze and Guattari's point of view, Bhabha's approach would probably seem to contribute to the capture of minorities. It denies them autonomy, and focuses on their relationship to the majority as a subordinate term. It thus ends up adding and changing axioms, rather than disrupting the structure of power.

Bibliography: Works by Homi Bhabha

Abbreviations Used for Homi Bhabha Texts

[A] Adagio (2005)

[AI] Affects and Interests (2010)

[AMD] Anxiety in the Midst of Difference (1996)

[ANNS] Anxious Nations, Nervous States (1994)

[BSDP] The Black Savant and the Dark Princess (2004)

[BWRAO] Black and White and Read all Over (1998)

[CA] Conversational Art (1998)

[CF] [Caliban Speaks to Prospero, in Mariani (ed.), *Critical Fictions* (1991)

[CIB] Culture's In-Between (1993/2013)

[D] DissemiNation (1990)

[DD] The Other Question (2002)

[DDR] Democracy De-Realized (2002)

[DH] Diaspora and Home (with K. Stierstorfer, 2017)

[DM1] Doublespeak and the Minority of One (2006)

[DTDA] Dance This Diss Around (1995)

[FBI] Freedom's Basis in the Indeterminate (1992)

[GM] On Global Memory (2009)

[HH] Halfway House (1997)

[IIQ] The Identity in Question (with co-authors, 1992)

[IoP] Identities on Parade (with B. Parekh, 1989)

[ISBD] On the Irremovable Strangeness of Being Different (1998)

[LC] The Location of Culture (1994)

[LS] Laughing Stock (1996)

[LSC] Liberalism's Sacred Cow (1999)

[MD] Making Difference (2003)

[MGM] Minoritization as a Global Measure (with Sheng Anfeng, 2009).

[MM] Minority Maneuvers (1997)

[ODD] On Disciplines and Destinations (2018)

[OF] Opening the Floodgates (1987)

[ONO] Our Neighbours, Ourselves (2011)

[OQ] The Other Question (1982)

[PAS] Poetics of Anxiety and Security (2016)

[PC] Postcolonial Critic (with D. Bennett and T. Collits, 1991)

[PN3] Public Notice 3 (Kallat et al., 2011)

[QE] Queen's English (1997)

[RA] Rethinking Authority (1997)

[RB] The Manifesto/Reinventing Britain: A Forum (1999)

[RCA] Cultural Appropriation: A Roundtable (2017)

[RF] Remembering Fanon (1986, 1987)

[RH] Race and the Humanities (1992)

[SBS] Statement for the *Critical Inquiry* Board Symposium (2004)

[SPD] Staging the Politics of Difference (Olson and Worsham, 1998)

[SS] Spectral Sovereignty, Vernacular Cosmopolitans, and Cosmopolitan Memories (2017)

[TA] Terror and After (2002)

[TS] Third Space (1990)

[TT] Translator Translated (with W.J.T. Mitchell, 1995)

[UE] Untimely Ends (2004)

[UMLA] Unpacking My Library Again (1995)

[VT] Visualizing Theory (with V. Burgess, 1992)

[WH] The World and the Home (1992)

[WOTE] Introduction to Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (2004)

[WR] On Writing and Rights (1999)

[WS] The White Stuff (1998).

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